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Travel Adventures

Brazil

John Waggoner

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Travel Adventures

Brazil

John Waggoner

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Maps by Toni Wheeler

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Introduction

Brazil is one of the most fascinating countries on the planet. Virtually a continent unto itself, this largest and most important country of South America is also the least understood. Travel here can be the experience of a lifetime, and yet most people don't know where to begin in planning their trip.

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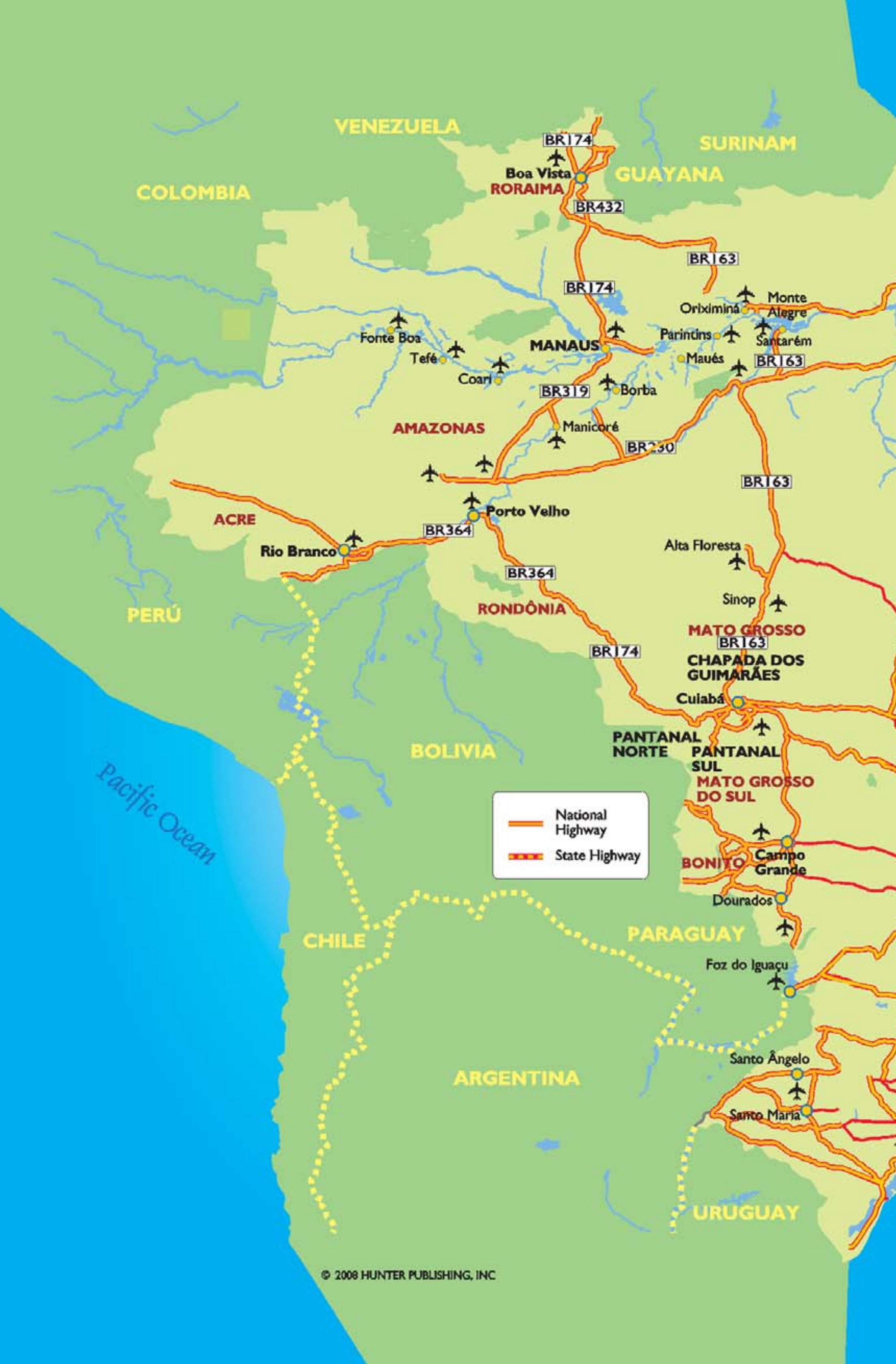
Everyone knows about the Amazon and Carnival, and most have ideas about the sultry city of Rio de Janeiro. People may think of the tropical beaches, the soccer legends, the supermodels, or perhaps they have seen films that expose the hard reality in the *favelas* like City of God. Many people know about Brazilian coffee or the national drink *cachaça*, or the *churrascaria* steakhouses that are opening up around the world.

It seems that every day more and more people are getting to know the rich culture and the arts, the customs and the cuisine. The rhythms of Brazil, the great musicians and singers, and its dances like *capoeira*, catch everyone's attention. But in spite of it all, the lyrics of this music and the inspiration for these arts remain an enigma for most of the world.

Unlocking these mysteries for you has been one of the greatest joys of my lifetime.

I had been living in Brazil for nearly a decade before I started writing this book. Working as a foreign correspondent and as the editor of a now defunct English-language newspaper called the *Brazilian Post*, I had a chance to study this country in detail. It was here that I met my fiancée and it is here that I was made an honorary citizen in a tiny town called Piancó, in the northeast of Brazil and the state of Paraíba.

As the plane descended the first time in São Paulo I recall being staggered by the *size* of the country and those endless city blocks. I realized that no matter what I had read, Brazil remained a blank page. The real identity of Brazil, its essence, somehow was different from what I thought I would find. The travel books I had read were hopelessly out of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PANTANAL SUL
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MATO GROSSO DO SUL
Pacific Ocean
National Highway
State Highway
BONITO
Campo Grande
Dourados
PARAGUAY
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Foz do Iguaçu
Santo Ângelo
ARGENTINA
Santo Maria
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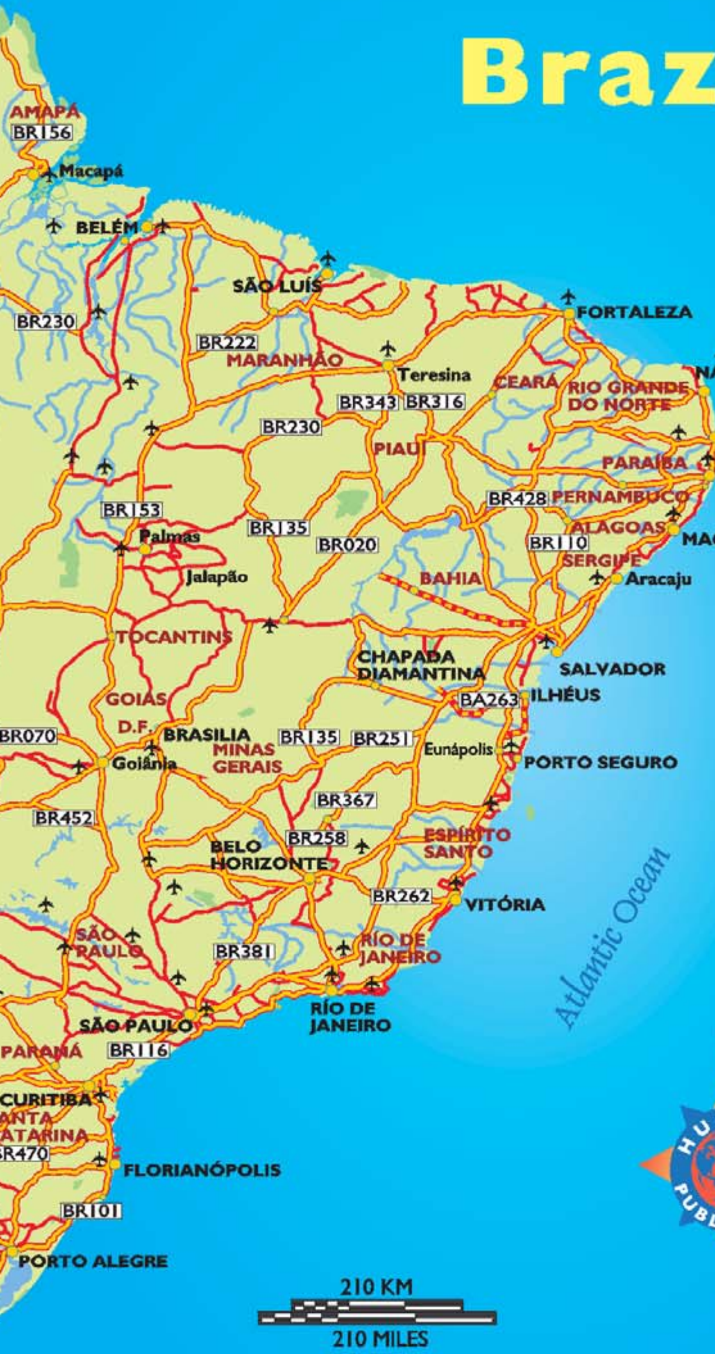
Brazil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FORTALEZA
Teresina
CEARÁ
RIO GRANDE DO NORTE
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PARAÍBA
RECIFE
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PERNAMBUCO
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BR135
ALAGOAS
MACEIÓ
Palmas
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SERGIPE
Jalapão
BAHIA
Aracaju
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ESPÍRITO SANTO
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SÃO PAULO
RÍO DE JANEIRO
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CURITIBA
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FLORIANÓPOLIS
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PORTO ALEGRE
210 KM
210 MILES

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date or even misleading, and they all said the same thing. So I decided to write my own book from what I had seen with my own eyes, about the very best of what Brazil has to offer.

This does not necessarily mean the most expensive places or the best known, nor have I included every city or even every state. The idea all along was not to chart out every square inch, but to suggest ideas based on what visitors actually do – sightseeing, outdoor adventures, dining, shopping, and getting to know the locals. Every destination in this book has a compelling reason for you to visit – whether it be for the natural beauty, for the nightlife, the cuisine, the shopping, or most importantly for the culture.

On every page I have tried to bring you something unique.

In writing this book, I went wandering through cities to find the best restaurants and nightclubs, came face to face with a charging tapir, drifted through the Amazon after my boat ran out of fuel, peered over rusty cannons through cracks in fortress walls, went rappelling and scuba diving in a primordial cave, saw dinosaur tracks in the scalding desert, traveled to indigenous villages and went scrambling through abandoned mines.

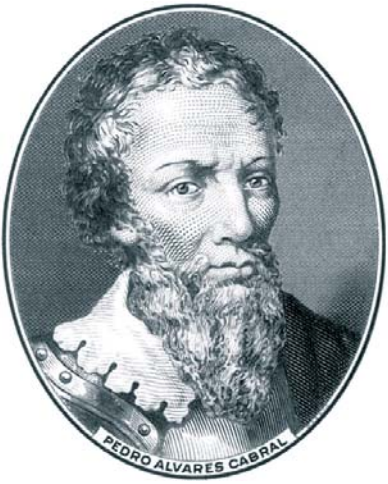
Along the way I made some important discoveries. I spoke with locals to get their advice and tried to avoid the clichés that seem always to find their way into the travel literature. I discovered what was interesting and what was not, what was safe and what was not, and have tried to include something in this book for everyone, no matter what your age or interests.

Most of all I found confirmation for what I suspected all along – that Brazil is the most amazing country on the planet. I think that you will agree.

History

Indigenous groups, mainly Tupis and Guarnanis, lived here for as much as 30,000 years, according to some archeologists. We didn't know much about the way they lived until the arrival of Europeans in 1500.

When Portuguese explorer **Pedro Álvares Cabral** anchored his fleet of 13 ships at the coast in southern Bahia (in the Northeast Region) he discovered Brazil wood, a valuable resource used to make red dye. It that gave the country its name.



Pedro Alvares Cabral

After the coast was mostly mapped out, in 1532 King João III of Portugal divided the country into 15 horizontal bands, called *capitanias*. Each was the responsibility of a different nobleman. The latter were more or less on their own to explore the lands and make them profitable, but most were unsuccessful. In 1549 João III decided to set up a Colonial government with a strong military and Jesuit presence in Salvador (in the Northeast Region).

At that point, under the governor Tomé de Sousa, colonization became more violent. The colonies produced sugar by use of indigenous and African slave labor, and warfare and disease began wiping out the indigenous population.

The Dutch took control in 1578 of most of the Northeast coast. In the Southeast the Brazilian settlers, many of them by now mestizos, continued to explore inland in mercenary groups called *Bandeirantes*, searching for wealth and slaves. By 1640 Portugal reconquered the Northeast and continued into the Amazon and the Southern Region. By 1670 gold was discovered, starting another phase of intense migration inland.

Empire & Gold

One after another, gold was found in the Southeast, the Center West and the Northeast. Brazil became the envy of the world. With the wealth came new ideas and, in 1778, a revolution called the Inconfidência started in Minas Gerais but was rapidly crushed.

In 1807 something unheard of happened. The Portuguese royal family fled Europe to escape Napoleon Bonaparte, and moved to Rio. Expanding the borders in a war with Argentina, they continued to face growing internal opposition. In 1822, the royals returned, and crown regent Pedro I declared Brazil independent. Rio de Janeiro became the capital of this new "constitutional empire." After a flurry of hope among Brazilians tired of the old ways, the situation grew more and more chaotic, and Pedro I was forced to abdicate in 1831.

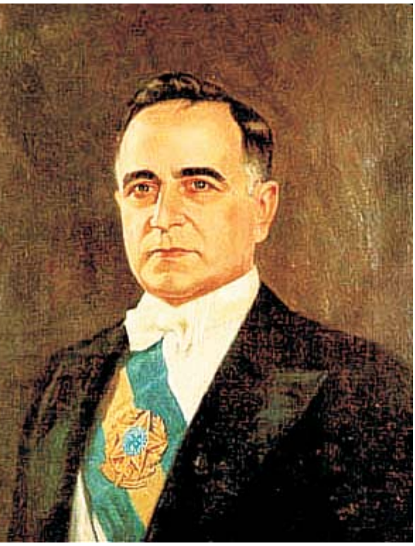
His young son, Pedro II, remained in Brazil and took power in 1839. Opposition began to rise in Europe against the slave trade – on which Brazil relied heavily. Meanwhile, more and more immigrants were pouring into Brazil from all over the world.

In 1865 Paraguay declared war and the Triple Alliance was formed between Brazil, Uruguay (by this time independent) and Argentina. In three years Paraguay was defeated and Brazil expanded into its territory. But the Empire was crumbling.

In 1887, Pedro II, plagued with scandal and losing power, finally fled to Europe. One year later his daughter, Princess Isabel, abolished slavery with the Áurea law and a short while later ended the monarchy and transferred power to a Republic.

Old & New Republics

The new government implemented major social changes, and it was a period of hope and inspiration for Brazil. The gold was long gone and agriculture became the source of Brazil's wealth: coffee, rubber, and cocoa.



Getúlio Vargas

As the country began to industrialize, social problems became more apparent in the growing cities. In 1917 a huge labor strike paralyzed Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo, and radical new political parties were taking shape with socialist and anarchistic views.

By 1922, frustration with the corruption and inefficiency of the government led to military uprisings in the cities. The greatest of these was the Prestes Column, a group of lieutenants under the command of Luis Carlos Prestes, which marched through the entire country from 1924 to 1926, before fleeing into exile.

In 1929, the price of Brazil's main product, coffee, fell drastically and the economy spiraled into ruin. Unemployment and poverty plagued the country, and the solution came in 1930 with the rise of a charismatic politician named **Getúlio Vargas**, who staged a revolution, declared a New Republic and began to rule with an iron hand.

The dictatorship made sweeping changes to help the urban working class, while at the same reducing the power of the unions that threatened it. The economy was departmentalized into separate political groups, which consolidated Vargas as the supreme authority and led to the emergence of Brazil as a global economic power.

Vargas admired the fascist state of Europe at the time, but was thrown into World War II on the side of the Allies after the Nazis sank Brazilian ships. When the war ended in 1945 and fascism was crushed, the dictatorship lost support and Vargas was forced to renounce.

From Dictatorship to Democracy

Under the new democratic government, in 1950 Vargas once again rose to power – this time as an elected President. Incredibly popular among some segments of society, he faced increasing opposition from more conservative officers in the military. On the brink of a military revolution to depose him, Vargas committed suicide in 1954.

Juscelino Kubitschek was elected President in 1955 with a new vision for Brazil. He moved the capital to Brasília (in the Center West Region) and oversaw more social reforms. This was a great period in Brazil, when music like *bossa nova* gained popularity around the world and the Brazilian soccer team won a dramatic World Cup victory in 1958.

Through successive presidents and a period of cultural growth, the economy continued to decline, and in 1964 the military seized power. This dictatorship was supposed to be temporary but remained in power until 1984, with periods of harsh social repression.

Though the dictatorship had ended, Brazil's huge foreign debt led to constant crises for the next 10 years. In 1994 President **Fernando Henrique Cardoso** initiated reforms that almost overnight halted inflation of thousands of percentage points per year. This stability strengthened the young democracy and set the stage for economic prosperity.

In 2002, President **Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva**, an opponent of Cardoso, became the first working-class leader. His government struck a balance between economic stability and concern for the poor, particularly in the Northeast, representing a significant milestone in the country's history. He was re-elected in 2006.

Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva

Government & Economy

Brazil is a Federative Republic, with a democratic government and socialized medicine and education. The President and Federal Legislature (Senate and Chamber of Deputies) are elected. The Judiciary is independent. The state and municipal governments have elected executive and legislative bodies.

Despite an effort to streamline the government, it remains highly bureaucratic. For many Brazilians, the highest professional goal is to secure a public sector job, as these provide better wages and job security than the private sector. As most of the jobs are in the cities, every year more and more people move to the urban areas, creating huge strains on infrastructure and social services, and leading to the creation of shantytowns called "favelas."

Brazil's economy is one of the largest in the world and split more or less equally between agriculture and industry. The agricultural sector is the world's largest producer of coffee, sugar, orange juice, beef, ethanol, and soybeans. The industrial segment is also very important as one of the largest producers of iron and steel, petroleum and other raw materials.

Brazil is a modern country – it is surprising to many first-time visitors just how modern. Brazil is known for its advanced technology such as ultra-deep-water oil drilling, high-tech medicines, a satellite base, a state-of-the-art jet manufacturer, advanced nuclear power plants, and, until recently, the world's longest free-standing bridge, as well as the world's largest hydroelectric dam. Its disproportionate size when compared to its neighbors is controversial, but Brazil has contributed greatly to regional cooperation and stability in recent years.

The economy has grown steadily since hyper-inflation was eradicated, and today Brazil is as prosperous as it has been in many years. Dependence on foreign debt continues to be a weakness for the economy. Wages remain low and, while health care and education are provided free to all citizens, both have major institutional problems.

Most of the former state-owned companies in the telecommunications, mining, transportation and electricity sectors were privatized in the past decade. This has led to greater availability of products and modernization of services, but some segments of society criticize the reduction in jobs and higher prices. While the press is free as a rule, the media is dominated by one large organization which depends heavily on paid advertising by the public sector.

Public security tends to be weak overall with less than 3% of GDP spent on the military and daunting institutional challenges for the police such as low salaries, corruption, and the lack of integration among police divisions. Private security is a huge business that dwarfs the public security sector.

Geography

Brazil is the largest country in all of Latin America, and covers just about half of the total land mass in South America. That makes it the fifth-largest country in the world after Canada, Russia, China and the United States.

Brazilians think of themselves as Americans, or South Americans, and consider people from the United States to be North Americans. The term “gringo” applies to any foreigner, is not meant to be offensive, and is used by just about everyone.

Brazil is mostly tropical, with the equator passing through the north and the Tropic of Capricorn passing through the southeast. Average annual temperatures vary around 28°C (82.4°F) in the north and 22°C (71.6°F) in the south. Information on local climates is included in each chapter.

Brazil borders Argentina and Uruguay to the South, Paraguay, Bolívia and Peru to the west, and Colombia, French Guiana, Suriname, Guiana and Venezuela to the north – that is to say, practically every other country in South America. Its border along the Amazon region was only very recently defined, with the help of satellite photos. The Atlantic Ocean forms the longest coastline in South America, extending some 7,367 km (or 4,578 miles).

One curiosity is that Brazil is practically the same size from north to south as it is from east to west. Its easternmost tip in Paraíba (in the Northeast Region) is closer to Africa than it is São Paulo and it is here that the first rays of the rising sun hit the South American continent.

Here there is practically every type of topography, including deserts, dunes, mountains, rainforests, canyonlands, plains, including special environments called Caatinga and the Cerrado, as explained in each of the chapters.

Language

Portuguese is the national language, but is a little different from that spoken in Europe, Africa and Asia. About 81% of the world's Portuguese speakers are Brazilian. It is possible to communicate in Brazilian Portuguese with other speakers of the language, but there is a striking difference in the accent and intonation, as well as certain important grammatical and orthographic differences.

Portuguese speakers can usually understand Spanish to some degree, but not the other way around. In a pinch you can try speaking Spanish.

Within Brazil there are also great differences in vocabulary, accent and the use of the familar *tu* rather than the more universal *você*. It can be difficult at times for a non-native speaker to follow what is said in parts of the country. The most obvious differences are between the north and south of the country, but each region has its own peculiarities. Because of the influence from African and indigenous languages as well as many words borrowed from English and other languages, Brazilian Portuguese has one of the richest vocabularies in the Americas.

Other languages are also spoken by certain Brazilians, including a dialect of German and Italian (or a dialect of Italian called Veneto) principally in the Southern Region. As well, Hengatu, a general Tupi dialect, is spoken in parts of the Amazon. English is spoken by a small population in the region called Americana, in São Paulo – the accent is similar to that in the Southern United States since these are the descendents of a Confederate colony that moved to Brazil during the Civil War.

Population

At the last census there were 170 million people people living in Brazil, but official estimates raise the number to over 185 million now. Of this total, about 43% live in the Southeast Region, 29% in the Northeast Region, 15% in the Southern Region, 7% in the Northern Region (Amazonia), and 6% in the Central West. The population is 51% women and 49% men, and a little over 80% of the population lives in urban areas. Additionally, close to 6½ million Brazilian citizens live overseas, primarily in the United States, Europe, and Japan.

Brazil has one of the most ethnically diverse populations anywhere in the world. This phenomenon began in the very first days of colonization, when it was the custom of the Tupis to offer a wife to all newcomers. Similarly, during the expansion inland, there were very few European women among the colonists, who started families with indigenous or African women.

There is such a generalized mix of races that it is difficult to define exact parameters for any individual. In general, just over 53% of the population declare themselves as "white" or Caucasian. Although well over half the population probably has at least some African and or indigenous ancestry, the official "grey" population (an unspecified mix of races) declares itself at only 38% of the total. Only about 6% declare themselves to be "black" or Afro-descended. Asian and indigenous populations each declare themselves as under 1% of the total, and an equal number claims to represent no race.

A predominately Catholic country, Brazil in recent decades has become more open to other religions. About 74% of the population is Catholic, over 15% is Protestant, 7% have no religion, and over 1% are Animists (mainly indigenous religions). While each is under 1%, there are also followers of Afro-indigenous religions Candombé or Umbanda, Judaism, Jehovah's Witness, Buddhism, and a very small number of other religions such as Islam, new Asian religions, or Hinduism. Many Brazilians, while declaring themselves Catholic, also practice Candomblé or Umbanda in what is called syncretism.

As a developing country, many of the social indicators in Brazil are sobering.

Among the population at least 25 years old, only 6.8% had completed a college degree or higher, whereas about 84% of the population over five years old can read. Almost one third of children aged four to seven do not go to school, a number directly related to poverty. It is interesting to note that excellent higher education at state and public univerisities is free. The problem appears to be enabling students with lower income levels to advance far enough in the primary and secondary school system to take advantage of those opportunities.

Brazil has one of the most unequal societies in the world in terms of wealth distribution, with huge gaps in access to health care, education, and basic utilities. Half the population earns two minimum monthly salaries or less – or about $200 per month. And many children – even younger than 10 – work to support their families.

Though there has been slight improvement in recent years, it is officially estimated that the richest 1% of the population earn as much as the poorest 50%, and the richest 10% earn 18 times more than the poorest 40%. Moreover, of the 1% richest population, 88% declared themselves to be "white" (Caucasian), while of the 10% poorest, 70% declared themselves to be "black" (Afro-descended) or "grey" (of mixed race).

Culture

It is sometimes hard to understand how a population that lacks so much, at least on paper, can be so rich in terms of culture.

Ever since colonization, Brazil has been trying to define its identity against a European standard while some of its greatest characteristics come from its home-grown mix of so many different races and cultures.

Some of the most remarkable national virtues are flexibility and spontaneity. Perhaps because things don't always work out as one would hope, Brazilians are masters at coming up with creative solutions to problems. There is even a term for it, the famous "*jeitinho brasileiro*," which means "doing things the Brazilian way."

This anarchistic streak goes back at least a hundred years. During the colonization, the more conservative European segments of the population worried about contraband, sexual morals and the overall state of affairs in the country. Even today it can be surprising how conservative some Brazilians can be about certain traditional social values and taboos, when they couldn't care less about so many others.

This very fine line between what is tolerated and what isn't can be mystifying to outsiders. One example of this are Brazil's notoriously tiny bikinis, considered pretty daring practically anywhere in the world. Toplessness, meanwhile, common enough elsewhere, is frowned on here and until quite recently prohibited (except during certain times such as Carnival). Again, the famous "jeitinho brasileiro" allows room to bend the rules a little bit just for fun.

In spite of the various social problems, there is incredible national pride. While Brazilians complain frequently about the economy, crime and other issues, almost nothing gets people more upset than hearing foreigners say the same thing. Brazilians love Brazil and they expect visitors to love it too, or at least not to point out the problems. So when problems arise, the best advice is to keep a sense of humor. Getting angry or upset in public is rare, considered shockingly rude, and tends to backfire. If you are patient, normally a half-way solution will be proposed. But keep in mind that laughing at a joke is fine, but laughing to show you appreciate what someone is saying might be interpreted as mockery.

Brazil may be the only country on the planet where just about anyone is accepted, regardless of their race, religion or sexual orientation. Gringos will always be gringos, even when they become citizens, but they are accepted.

Even among the very humble, or perhaps especially among the most humble, there is great generosity of spirit. Cordiality and respect for others' opinions is a common virtue. Brazilians as a rule, maybe more than any other nationality, are truly interested in what other people think. This makes for lively and spontaneous conversations everywhere, and occasionally causes hurt feelings when someone doesn't think their views have been considered.

Brazilians are also very sentimental and appreciate small gestures of friendship. It is almost unthinkable to greet someone or to part company without two air-kisses on the cheeks (among women and for the opposite gender) or a sideways hug with a pat on the back (among men). At the very least you should give a thumbs up sign to say hello.

And there are peculiarities that, after living here for over a decade, I still can't understand. For instance, when someone calls you on the phone, the first thing you'll usually hear is "*quem fala?*" or "who is this?" Or, when I was short a couple of reais on a taxi fare once, the driver told me, "no worries, just pay another taxi driver." Figure that one out.

Whether it is the music, the food, even the language, Brazil is a mix of cultures and styles that is unique. It may require a little bit of "jeitinho" to travel here, but it certainly is a lot of fun.

Cuisine

Brazilian cuisine is a unique mix of European, indigenous and African styles, but is as varied as the culture itself. Specific information on regional cuisine and local specialties is provided, but here is a general guide to what you can expect.

For breakfast, cold cuts, bread, cakes, and crackers are served, sometimes with eggs and sausages at the hotels. The largest meal of the day tends to be lunch, most commonly served with beans, rice and sometimes pasta, plus some kind of protein, usually grilled fish or meat, and a salad. At night, it is common to eat lightly or just to snack.

Starfruit tree

One of the best parts of Brazilian cuisine are the delicious fruits, served especially as juice (*suco*) but also in certain kinds of pastries and ice cream. There are hundreds of different fruits, but some you may come across are pineapple (*abacaxi*), passion fruit (*maracujá*), mango (*manga*), guava (*goiába*), starfruit (*carambola),* orange *(laranja*) and, in parts of the country, *açái*, an energetic berry that is consumed as a staple in the Amazon. When blended and mixed with milk, it is called a *vitamina*.

Coffee is served black in tiny cups called *cafezinho*, typically at the end of the meal or even free at some commercial establishments and government offices. When you request a cafezinho, you will usually get the bill too. In the cities, European-style *café espresso* is more common. Served with milk (usually heated milk with a little coffee), it is called *café com leite*, and, when you want less milk, it is called *café pingado*. Cappucino, latte or other gourmet coffee drinks are rarely found.

Caipirinha

The number one national dish is *feijoada*, or black beans stewed with various types of meats, and served with fried kale, a slice of orange, rice and farofa, a typical Brazilian starch made from manioc flour. Influenced by African slaves, who were forced to use animal protein that was left over, the most authentic feijoada contains salted ears, feet, tails, tongues and snouts of pigs. Normally, though, it contains dried beef, salted pork, sausages, and bacon, and is served with a *caipirinha*, the national cocktail made from cachaça and lime.

Brazil has some of the best beef in the world, as hormones are banned and most cattle are range-fed. There are many typical cuts not found elsewhere, and the best way to try them all is at a *churrascaria* all-you-can-eat steakhouse, where the meats are brought to your table. This style of eating is called a *rodízio*. The most famous cut is called *picanha*, served with the fat. Typically meat is grilled and seasoned only with salt, and this *churrasco* is very common everywhere.

Another famous Brazilian food is *comida baiana*, from Bahia. Heavily influenced by African cooking, these are mostly seafood stews cooked in *dendê* palm oil, called *moquecas*, and served with rice and *farofa*. This is about as spicy as Brazilian food gets.

As a rule, most food is lightly seasoned with onion, salt, garlic and perhaps with green peppers, not unlike Latin American food elsewhere. If you like it hot, on the side there is *pimenta*, or small malagueta peppers steeped in olive oil. There are also unique Portuguese elements using eggs and especially the festival dish *bacalhau* made from salt cod. Mediterranian influences are also common, as are those from Japan in the major cities.

Here are some of the most famous national dishes:

In Minas Gerais, there is *comida mineira*, with lots of starch (manioc or rice) and different meats (pork, bacon, and sausages primarily). The most famous is *tutu de feijão*, which is black beans mashed with manioc flour, served alongside fried kale and pork loin. Chicken is stewed in dishes such as *frango com molho pardo*.

Amazonian food has stronger indigenous influences, especially the dish from Pará called *pato no tucupi*, described on page 483. River fish is more common though, cooked in a variety of appetizing ways.

Near the Pantanal and parts of the Southern Region, rice is a common theme (in fact this is true everywhere in Brazil). The most famous is *arroz de carreteiro*, which is cooked together with tiny pieces of dried beef and seasonings.

Travel Information

Visa & Customs

US citizens are required to obtain a valid tourist visa from a Brazilian consular office to enter the country. Details are posted online at the government site, www.braziltour.com. Airlines are pretty good about checking this before you board, but if you do arrive without one you will be sent back home on the next available plane.

It is a good idea to be cordial with the local customs agents. Typically tourists are not subject to extensive inspections, but when that happens it can take a long time and they go through everything. Normally, they just X-ray your bag. What they are looking for primarily are Brazilians who try to slip through without paying taxes on imported goods, though for some reason laptops occasionally raise red flags. If that happens, just explain that you are a tourist, the item is yours, and you will be taking it out of the country when you leave.

Typically, you hand over your customs declaration after picking up your bags, then you press a button that will give you a red light or a green light. If it's red, your bags will be searched.

Leaving the country, you will have to present your entry form, so keep it tucked in your passport. Exporting wildlife, certain animal products (bone, feathers, etc.), or sometimes indigenous items is illegal. Buying from legitimate shops is advised.

Airlines

Brazil recently had a shortage of domestic flights and overbooking or delays were common. It is advised to make reservations well ahead of time and arrive at the airport at least two hours before your flight. The main domestic carriers have code-sharing agreements with international airlines so you should also check with them. Direct international flights are usually available to São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Salvador, Recife, Fortaleza, Belém, Manaus and Belo Horizonte. Charter flights are available through a travel agent.

International and domestic airport locations are noted in each chapter.

International airlines serving Brazil include Aerolineas Argentinas, Aeromexico, Aerosur, Air Canada, Air France, Air Nippon Airlines, Alitátlia, American Airlines, Avianca, British Airways, Continental, Delta Airlines, Iberia, JAL, KLM, Korean Airlines, LAN Chile, Lufthansa, South African Airways, Swissair, and United Airlines.

Domestic carriers with international, regional and Ponte Aerea flights (airbus service between Rio and São Paulo) include Varig (☎ 4003-7000, www.varig.com.br), Tam (☎ 4002-5700, in US 888-2 FLYTAM, www.tam.com.br), Gol (☎ 0300-789-2121, www.voegol.com.br), and BRA (☎ 11-6445-4310, www.voebra.com.br).

Regional carriers include Ocean Air (☎ 4004-4040, www.oceanair.com.br), Trip (☎ 0300-789-8747, www.airtrip.com.br), Pantanal (☎ 0800-602-5888 in Brazil, www.voepantanal.com.br), and Rico (☎ 92 4009 8333, www.voerico.com.br).

Money

REPÚBLICA FEDERATIVA DO BRASIL
1
MODELO
BANCO CENTRAL DO BRASIL
REAL
A 0003002824 C

The local currency is the *real* (plural *reais*), worth 100 *centavos*. Bills are denominated in one, two, five, ten, 20, 50 and, rarely, R$100, each with a different color. Travelers checks are not widely accepted but you can cash them at hotels, some banks, or travel agencies. Most establishments accept credit cards.

You can get cash from the Cirrus and Plus systems or credit card advances at certain automatic tellers in some banks, usually Citibank, HSBC, Banco do Brasil, or Bradesco. There is usually a limit of R$1,000 per day. In towns with heavy tourist flow, sometimes you can trade directly at the bank. Hotels provide this service at a disadvantageous rate, while *casas de cambio*, or exchange bureaus, sometimes give you a good rate.

Gratuities

Tipping is less common in Brazil than in the US. Most restaurants include a 10% gratuity automatically on the bill. Unless you received absolutely horrible service, you should pay it. In some places such as Rio de Janeiro state, it is required by law. Locals often leave a bit more for good service and, if it is not included, 10% to 15% is about right. At bars, normally you will not tip per drink, but service might be included on the bill. Also, don't leave an extra tip on the table – you should hand it directly to the waiter.

For taxis, don't tip but do round up to the nearest real and pay a few extra reais for bags (even if you carry them yourself). At hotels, optionally, you can leave a little extra for the maid when you check out with a note saying "*obrigado*" so they know it is a tip.

Costs

Every effort was made to ensure that the prices listed in this book were accurate at the time of publication, but they are subject to change without warning. The average exchange rate used is R$2.5 per $1. You should be able to adjust the prices based on the exchange rate when you travel.

For hotels with rooms in different price categories, we generally list the higher price level. Service charges of 10% are commonly added. All hotels prices given are for standard double occupancy, generally in high season – discounts may be available in low season. Restaurants were listed according to the average price of the meal without drinks, tax or tip.

DINING PRICE CHART	
Price per person for an entrée	
$	Under $8
$$	$9-$15
$$$	$16-$25
$$$$	$26-$35
$$$$$	Over $35

HOTEL PRICE CHART	
Cost per night for two before tax	
$	Under $50
$$	$51-$100
$$$	$101-$150
$$$$	$151-$200
$$$$$	Over $200

Time Zones

Brazil has four time zones. Brasília (in the Center West) is three hours behind Greenwich Mean Time, adding or subtracting daylight savings time in either hemisphere. Brazil does not have a specific date for daylight savings time to begin each year.

Dialing Out

Each city has a city code listed with every number in the chapters that follow. Within the city you do not dial the code but you will have to do so from outside the local calling area. Local numbers are usually eight digits now, but not everywhere – if you have a seven digit number that does not work, try adding a two or three in front of it.

For a call from one city to another you must dial zero then an operator code before the city code – the choices are usually listed at hotels or pay phones but 21 (for the operator Embratel) is accepted all over the country. Thus, to call from Rio to São Paulo, you would dial 0-21 (or other operator code of your choice), the city code (11 for São Paulo), then the number. To dial out of the country, first dial 00, then the operator code, the country code, the area code, then the telephone number. There should be a card by the phone at your hotel to explain this. Note that many hotels impose a ridiculous surcharge even for local calls.

Cell phones can be rented at the airport for local use.

Electric Current

There is no universal standard for electric current in Brazil, and it varies from location to location. Always verify the local current before connecting anything.

Health & Vaccinations

Medical care comparable to that in developed countries is available in the major cities, but elsewhere it is not. Travelers insurance is recommended since the free public hospitals may not offer the quality of service you would want in an emergency. Consulates routinely maintain lists of English-speaking doctors but their quality can vary.

Special vaccinations are generally not required. It may be a good idea to have your routine vaccinations, such as tetanus, updated, and in some cases you may need a yellow fever vaccination (keep your certificate) – but get it at least 10 days before you are due to arrive.

Yellow fever vaccination is recommended for the following states, even though cases are rare: Acre, Amazonas, Amapá, the Federal District (Brasília), Goiás, Maranhão, Mato Grosso do Sul, Pará, Rondônia, and Roraima e Tocantins. It is required if you are heading to or have recently traveled in Colombia, Peru, Venezuela and certain African countries.

Minor stomach ailments can be fairly common, depending on the location, and waterborne parasites exist in remote or rural areas. Be careful eating foods with a lot of dendê palm oil, which can be hard to digest. Drink bottled water, and avoid salads or uncooked vegetables in all but the very best hotels and restaurants. Ice from tap water is usually not a problem, but you can ask for your drinks without ice if you want ("*sem gelo*"). Food can spoil quickly in the heat – be selective about where you eat, especially in remote areas.

Check with a doctor about other precautions against hepatitis or typhoid, and about the advantages and disadvantages of anti-malarials where suggested. One fairly common mosquito-borne illness is dengue fever, which causes symptoms similar to malaria (generally not life-threatening), but there is no vaccine. Use mosquito repellent. Vitamin B complex can help ward off mosquitos; don't use perfume, which can attract them.

Chagas, an extremely rare but fatal disease carried by a mite in some straw mats in remote areas of the north, was once untreatable but today there is treatment. There are also some exotic skin parasites, but you are unlikely to run across them. Where they occur it has been noted in the appropriate chapters. Tuberculosis exists but is uncommon. Rabies is very rare but does appear in isolated parts of Brazil, especially in the Pantanal region where there are vampire bats. Leprosy exists as well in isolated areas of the Amazon where you are unlikely to visit.

For dangerous wildlife see the individual chapters below.

Keep in mind that the tropical weather can rapidly cause sunburn or dehydration, so take adequate precautions. Skin rashes or yeast infections are also fairly common in humid, tropical environments. A doctor can advise you.

Most medicines can be obtained at a pharmacy with a prescription. Many prescription drugs such as antibiotics or blood pressure medicine are sold over the counter at pharmacies (use the technical name, since the brand name may be different here), as are condoms, lens solution and toiletries. If you are carrying controlled medications, keep your prescription with you.

In the unlikely event that a blood transfusion is needed, blood is supposed to be screened for blood-borne diseases but you should know your blood type and arrange a screened donor if at all possible.

Staying Safe

With all the bad press about crime and personal safety, a lot of people are unsure what to expect on their first visit to Brazil. Concern is understandable, but recent surveys completed by outgoing foreign tourists showed that the overwhelming majority (97.2%) said they plan to come back, and 88.2% had an even better time than they expected. So take the headlines with a grain of salt.

Even so, certain general precautions are in order. If you look at the demographics in this section, you will see that there is a huge gap between rich and poor. Foreign tourists are perceived here as wealthy even if they consider themselves to be only middle class. Because of their language or appearance, travelers stand out and can be targeted by criminals or simply by opportunists. By the same token, tourism is important to the economy and there tend to be English-speaking Tourist Police and extra patrols available to keep tourists safe in the cities.

Urban violence, related to the drug trade, is a very serious problem in Brazil but most of the violence takes place far from the travel spots. In fact the chapters below provide warnings or totally exclude areas where there is a history of violent crime, even when those areas are normally considered tourist attractions. In nearly every chapter there is detailed information about how to stay safe, specifying neighborhoods and situations to avoid.

Most of the problems travelers experience relate to theft, being overcharged by a taxi-diver or otherwise taken advantage of. Keep in mind, though, that what seems like a rip-off may often be nothing more than a communication problem. With patience you can resolve many of these problems.

Outside the cities, incidents are less common and you have to watch out for hazards more than anything else – inadequately prepared food, bad drivers, or unsafe conditions in general. In most cases these suggestions err on the side of caution, but you should always pay attention to the conditions of your outfitters' equipment and overall professionalism. On a boat there should always be life preservers, for example, and a professional guide will always be more concerned about your safety than an amateur.

In general the best advice is to remain low profile. Dress casually and don't flash expensive watches, cameras or jewelry. Try not to display wads of currency and use your front pockets or socks, which are harder to pickpocket. If you really want to play it safe you might use a money belt, but a professional crook may find that too. Keep an eye on your credit cards and keep receipts. Hotels almost always have safes – use them. And never, no matter what, trade money with people on the street or at airports, as this is a very common scam.

You are required to carry identification in Brazil, but a copy of your passport is enough in most cases, so leave the original in your hotel safe.

If you run into a problem, get in touch with the local police or consulate. Local authorities recommend that you do not attempt to fight an assailant or otherwise react. Just hand over the valuables and get away as quickly as you can. Brazilians in big cities sometimes carry two wallets or two cell phones – one for themselves and one for a mugger. It is conventional wisdom in Brazil to carry at least some small cash at all times to hand over in such situations.

This book is not here to moralize, but involvement with drugs, which are easy enough to obtain, can be asking for serious trouble. The laws in Brazil are very strict. The consulate or a lawyer may ensure that you are humanely treated, but they can't guarantee you will get out of jail if you make a bad choice.

The one thing to keep in mind is good sense. Trust your instincts. If you get a bad feeling about something, just opt out.

Driving in Brazil

We describe how to get to various destinations by car when the routes are safe and enjoyable. Otherwise, the options are indicated.

Car rental details are described in each chapter. You will need a valid drivers license in your home country plus a credit card. There are offices at airports. Insurance is standardized, with shared liability, available directly from the rental agency.

Cars frequently drive too fast for conditions, and you must always be on the lookout for erratic drivers. Be especially cautious at intersections since red lights and stop signs are frequently ignored, more often at night. Drivers commonly back up the wrong way down the one-way street as a matter of convenience, and they pass on either side (even into an oncoming lane).

Road conditions can be hazardous (pot holes, speed bumps, poorly lit or graded). Be alert at night for drunk drivers. Right of way goes to the larger vehicle (especially outside the cities). Commercial trucks can be extremely dangerous, so give them wide berth on the highways. When someone wants to pass, they will ride your rear bumper and flash their lights. This can be disconcerting. Save yourself some grief and let them pass.

Sometimes there are special lanes for buses, which are marked. Stay out of them.

Pedestrians commonly jaywalk even on major highways! Street vendors and homeless kids will approach your car at intersections – keep your windows up.

If you are stopped at a police roadblock, explain that you are a foreigner and you should have no problem. Police are instructed to shoot any car that tries to blow past! Police use roof lights and sometime sirens at all times. If they want you to pull over they will signal this by driving alongside and motioning downward with the hand, but this is extremely rare.

When filling up, you have a choice of gasoline (*gasolina*), diesel or ethanol (*alcool*). Make sure you know what fuel your car uses. All stations are full service.

If your car breaks down, you are required to set up a small reflective triangle (normally in the trunk) a good distance from the rear of your car. Most drivers have a cell phone, so you might get help by waving somebody down, but don't count on it. Sometimes "broken down" cars are in fact a ruse for an assault, and drivers tend not to stop.

Finally, parking space is hard to find at any time in the cities, and almost inevitably after you park someone will jog up and demand money. Although this activity is illegal (except for uniformed attendants), local authorities on the take ignore it, so it is best to pay the small ransom to avoid damage to your car. Aggressive behavior by these "flanelinhas" can be reported to the police, but don't expect much to be done about it.

Brazil's Top 20

- **Amazon Expeditions**: The trip of a lifetime
- **Bonito** (Anhumas Abyss): Crystal clear rivers and caves
- **Fernando de Noronha** (entire island): A rustic island paradise
- **Foz de Iguaçu**: Thundering falls and wildlife
- **Pantanal Wildlife**: Alligators, birds, and jaguars
- **Rio de Janeiro**: The world's most beautiful city
- **Ouro Preto**: History and culture

- **Pipa & Tibau do Sul**: Unspoiled beaches and cliffs
- **Jericoacoara**: Mangues secos, dunes and remote beach villa
- **Florianópolis**: Incredible beaches and culture of the Azores
- **Carnival**: The worlds greatest party in Rio, Salvador, or Olinda
- **Chapada Diamantina**: Explore the great outdoors in diamond country
- **Nightlife in Lapa**: *Samba* and *choro* to dance the night away
- **Salvador**: Fascinating local history and cuisine
- **Chapada dos Guimarães**: The mystical geodesic center of Brazil
- **Chapada dos Veadeiros**: Valley of the Moon
- **Mercado Ver o Peso**: Exotic Amazonian marketplace in Belém
- **Búzios**: Beaches, nightlife and sophisticated cuisine
- **Ilha Grande**: Beaches, trails and pirates' coves
- **Afro-Brazilian Culture**: Quilombos, Capoeira and Candomblé

Holidays

Festivals and events are detailed in each chapter.

During national holidays resort areas fill up, while banks, public offices, and many shopping establishments close. There are other holidays to keep in mind as well, which vary from state to state and city to city (such as Patron Saints Days) and, in Rio de Janeiro, Zumbi Day (Black Consciousness Day) on November 20.

During the World Cup, when the Brazil national team plays, it is a half-day holiday and during finals the whole country shuts down. In June there are "festas juninas," which are rural-themed festivals with square dancing and games, but things stay open. During Carnival virtually everything shuts down.

- January 1 (New Years Day)
- Before Ash Wednesday (Carnival)
    - 2008 February 2-5
    - 2009 February 21-24
    - 2010 February 13-16
    - 2011 March 5-8
    - 2012 February 18-21
- March or April (Good Friday)
- May 1 (Labor Day)
- June (Corpus Christi)
- September 7 (Independence Day)
- October 12 (Nossa Senhora Aparecida Day)
- November 12 (Finados Day)
- November 15 (Proclamation of Republic)
- December 25 (Christmas)

Embassies & Consulates

Citizen services are available after hours in an emergency.

For American citizens, the Embassy in Brasília is at Avenida das Nações, Quadra 801, Lote 3 (☎ 61-3312-7000). In São Paulo, the consulate is on Rua Henri Dunant 500, Chácara Santo Antônio (☎ 11-5186-7000). In Rio de Janeiro, the consulate is at Avenida Presidente Wilson, 147, Castelo downtown (☎ 21-3823-2000). In Recife, the consulate is at Rua Gonçalves Maia, 163 in Boa Vista (☎ 81-3421-2441).

For British subjects, the Embassy in Brasília is at SES 801 Conjunto K Lote 8 (☎ 61-3329-2300). In São Paulo the consulate is at Rua Ferreira Araújo 741, 2nd floor in Pinheiros (☎ 11-3094-2700). In Rio de Janeiro, the consulate is at Praia do Flamengo 284, 2nd floor (☎ 21-2555-9600).

Information Sources

ℹ In every chapter there is information on local tourist boards. These are government offices and they sometimes have a special hotline to call to resolve any problems or questions you might have. Very often they also have brochures, maps or Internet sites, but the quality varies.

The most important is **www.braziltour.com**, a tourism portal with information in many languages run by the federal tourist office, Embratur.

For professional guide services to many of the ecological destinations suggested in this book, **Ambiental Expeditions** (☎ 11-3818-4600) is my top choice. Local guides are suggested in each chapter, but Ambiental has local contacts, an excellent safety record, and can help you handle all aspects of your trip. Their site is www.ambiental.tur.br.

An excellent resource is the **Guia Quatro Rodas**, nearly indispensible if you plan any road trips in Brazil. In addition to very good maps, there is information in Portuguese about virtually every major town or city in the country. The annually updated guide is sold at newsstands in major cities. Quatro Rodas also has a book called *Guia das Praias*, which has information on virtually every beach in the country.

For additional details on ecological tourism in English beyond the scope of this book, the best resources in Brazil are sponsored publications called the Philips Guides, *National Parks* and *Pantanal & Bonito*. These are available at some bookstores and have lots of information and photos about history and wildlife.

Travelers Tales Brazil from Lonely Planet is an interesting and amusing look at slice-of-life travel experiences here, and recommended to get to know the culture. The magazine *Brazzil* is also highly recommended, with articles and independent news in English about everything under the sun, currently only distributed free on the Internet.

Two fellow foreign correspondents and friends of mine have sites that I would recommend: **BrazilMax.com** has a lot of information about Brazil in general, while **gringoes.com** is also very useful, especially regarding São Paulo.

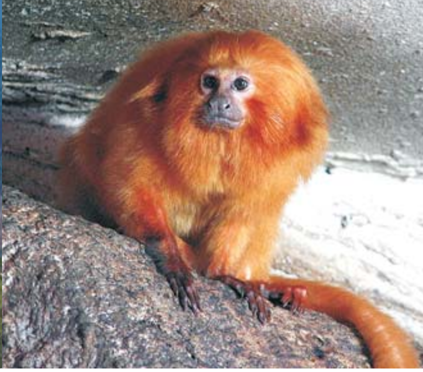
The Internet is a great resource for information about Brazilian culture, lifestyle and travel. Every day, sites come and go so it is difficult to make specific recommendations. Most sites are in Portuguese but increasingly there are some with content in English. Be wary of suggestions for guides, hotels and restaurants, however, since paid advertising can look like normal content and these sites may not be oriented toward international standards.

Better hotels suggested in this book nearly all have Internet sites that can be easily searched and accessed. This is recommended because you can make reservations online and see photos of rooms and facilities, plus there are sometimes photos and tips about the destination.

Local newspapers are great resources for what is going on while in Brazil (shows, temporary exhibits, movies) if you can read Portuguese. The best nationally circulated papers are *O Globo*, *Jornal do Brasil*, *Estado de São Paulo* and *Folha de São Paulo*. The *Jornal de Turismo* is another good option and easily accessed online.

Every effort has been made to ensure that establishments, prices, and their contact details were accurate at the time of publication. However, telephone numbers change with great frequency in Brazil, as do prices, and businesses do close or change their names. Checking in with them by e-mail before you travel is always a good idea.

Listings in this book with one star (★) are highly recommended. Those earning two stars (★★) are considered exceptional. A few attractions, resorts and restaurants rate three stars (★★★), which means they should not be missed.



The Southeast

Most travelers to Brazil will pass through the Southeast Region at least for a brief stay on their way elsewhere, and many spend their entire time here. The most prosperous as well as the most populous region of Brazil, the Southeast includes the states of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Minas Gerais and Espirito Santo.

Much of Brazil's history and culture owes itself to the Southeast.

IN THIS CHAPTER

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- **Rio de Janeiro 28**
- **The Sun Coast 79**
- **The Green Coast 104**
- **Angra dos Reis 105**
- **Ilha Grande 109**
- **Paraty 117**
- **São Paulo 130**
- **The Paulista Coast 151**
- **Minas Gerais 162**

Rio de Janeiro is the top destination in all of Brazil, and its stunningly beautiful coastline, with rainforested mountains over the ocean, is the country's calling card. On either side of the coast from the capital there are spectacular resort areas called the **Green Coast** and the **Sun Coast**. The famous city of **Rio de Janeiro** was once the capital of the country, and today it keeps alive many of Brazil's most important traditions such as samba, culinary dishes like *feijoada*, or the crazy and sensual Carnival holiday.

São Paulo is also an important destination due to its size and economic importance. While travel in the crowded and modern capital tends to be driven by business rather than pleasure, there is a lot to see and it is a worthwhile destination for pleasure seekers in its own right, with great restaurants and shopping. The **Paulista Coast** has amazingly beautiful beaches and ecological preservation areas, with some of the highest quality services to be found anywhere outside the major cities in Brazil.

Inland, there is **Minas Gerais**, one of the greatest contributors to the history of South America, with its rich mineral wealth and important products such as coffee. There are excellent options for seeing wildlife

Satellite image of Southeast Brazil
(brazilbrazil.com)

and the natural surroundings in **Serra do Cipó**, Brazil's oldest national park, which is still not heavily traveled by foreigners. The **Historic Cities** – dating from the opulent Gold Rush days, when Brazil was the richest country in the hemisphere – are another excellent option for their rich Colonial history and architecture as well as their scenic beauty and proximity to the main points of entry into the country.

Espirito Santo is not a recommended destination in this edition as transportation, institutional security, and services are still limited. But adventurous travelers might find interesting places to visit in this coastal state. It is adjacent to the Northeast and has many cultural similarities.

The overall level of services tends to be a lot higher in the Southeast. With its cosmopolitan and relatively affluent populations, prices are a little higher than average as well. It is one of the easiest regions in Brazil to get around in – educational levels are higher than average and it is common to find English-speakers and people used to foreigners.

If the region represents some of the best in Brazil for sightseeing, culture, dining, shopping and nightlife, it is also here in the Southeast that many of the country's social problems such as crime and urban congestion are more pronounced. The vast majority of people who visit have no problems, but the destinations in this section were carefully chosen with your safety and comfort in mind. When called for, additional safety tips are provided to make your trip as enjoyable and hassle-free as possible.

The suggestions provided include the very best of what the region has to offer, divided by state and destination, then by activity. The following list can help you plan your trip in this fascinating and exciting region of Brazil.

Road Trips

- The Paulista Coast
- The Historic Cities (Minas Gerais)

Natural Wonders

- Rio de Janeiro

- Serra do Cipó (Minas Gerais)
- Ilha Grande (The Green Coast)
- Ilha Bela (The Paulista Coast)

Coastal Resorts

- The Green Coast
- The Sun Coast
- The Paulista Coast

Land Adventures

- Minas Gerais
- São Paulo
- Rio de Janeiro

Sport Fishing

- Rio de Janeiro
- The Sun Coast (Cabo Frio)
- The Green Coast (Paraty)

Historical Sightseeing

- Rio de Janeiro (Capital)
- The Green Coast (Paraty)
- The Historic Cities (Minas Gerais)

Culture & Nightlife

- Rio de Janeiro (Capital)
- São Paulo (Capital)
- The Sun Coast
- The Green Coast
- The Paulista Coast

Tips for Exploring the Southeast

A common misperception of first-time visitors to Brazil is that the entire country is jungle. The Southeast Region is the most modern and sophisticated part of Brazil and, in the cities, the quality of goods and services (at least with the better hotels, restaurants and other places included in this book) is comparable to what you might find in Europe or the United States.

The point is that there is no special need to carry extra baggage for fear of not being able to find what you might need, be it toilet paper, film, batteries, sun tan lotion or other such items.

Broadband Internet or wireless access is increasingly available, even outside the major cities of the region. Many of the bookstores in the cities have English-language periodicals if you want them and a lot of the restaurants in heavily traveled areas have menus translated into foreign languages as well.

For the cities, no special preparations are needed except getting ready to have fun. But speaking even a little Portuguese will go a long way toward improving the quality of your trip. Culturally, the region is the most diverse in Brazil, with people of all races and religions. Urban residents in the Southeast like to stay up-to-date with technology, current affairs and trends. They love to chat a little bit to see what you think about Brazil or the world in general.

If you plan to head out to some of the more remote and rugged destinations here, appropriate suggestions for what to bring are included in the individual chapters. Remember that, outside the cities or resort areas even in the Southeast Region, the quality and availability of basic services tend to drop compared to European or US standards.

Credit cards are commonly accepted in most of the resort areas of the Southeast Region and many ATMs also provide cash on the spot for credit cards or bank cards in the urban areas frequented by tourists. In a pinch you might trade cash at your hotel or local exchange bureau but you will lose out on the rate, and you should never under any circumstances swap cash on the street.

Rio & Surroundings

Rio de Janeiro

Overlooking Rio de Janeiro

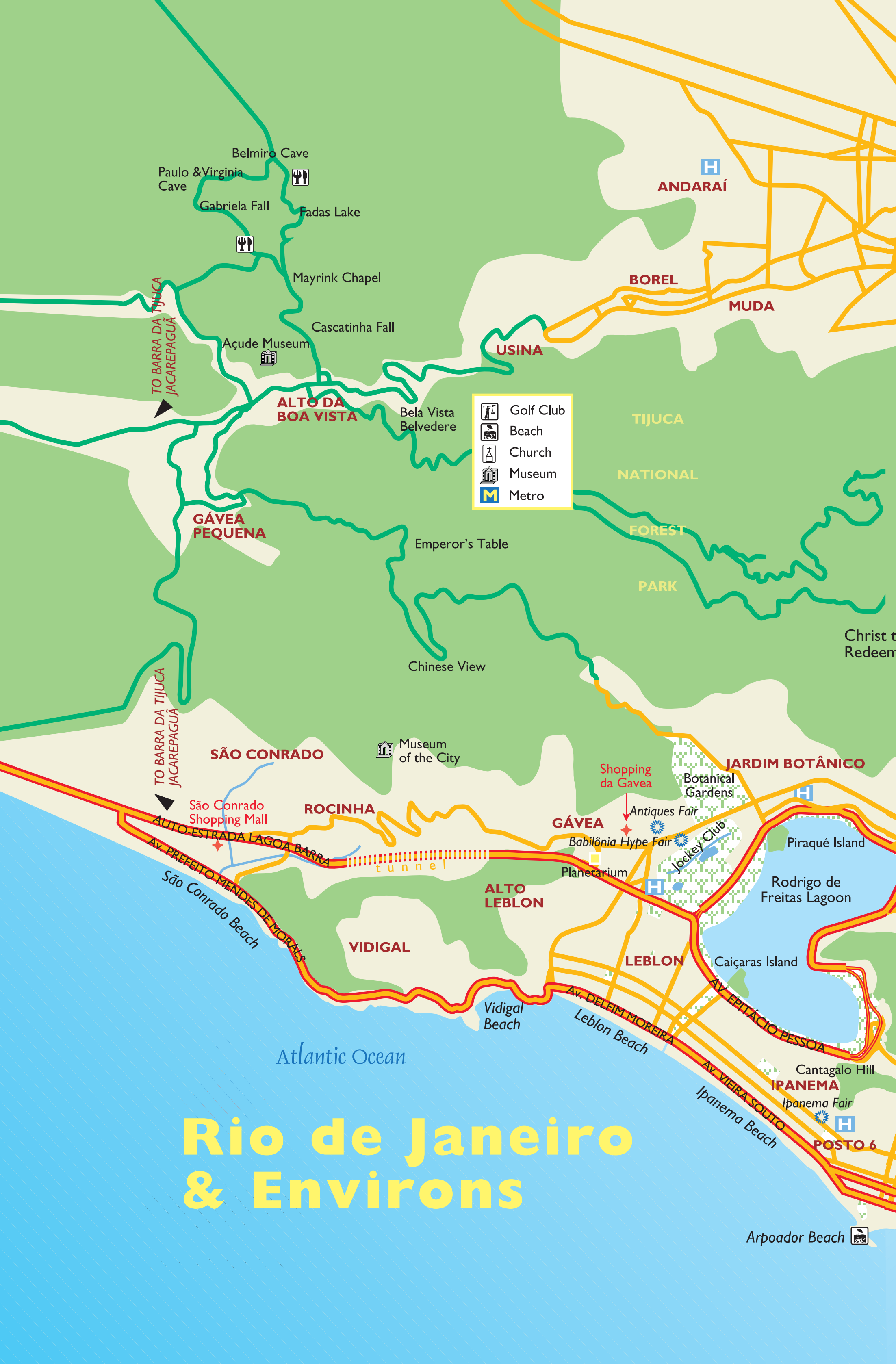
Rio is what people tend to think of when they think of Brazil. Discovered on New Years Day in 1502, the region was named by the Portuguese (they mistakenly thought the bay was the mouth of a river, calling it River of January or "Rio de Janeiro"). They continued southward down the coast, but returned in 1503 and built a fortress to defend their discovery against the French, who also sought to control the lucrative brazilwood trade. Many of the Tupi-Guaranis who originally lived here fled after Europeans arrived. Some joined the Jesuits, and others were put to work on the sugar cane plantations that would enrich the Portuguse Empire. Some sided with the French and attacked the settlement. In 1555, after decades of fighting, the French were finally driven out. The Jesuits pacified many of the indigenous groups, and the colonists began fortifying the town in 1565.

View from Corcovado Mountain

The colony was not as important as Bahia to the Portuguese, but it was vital for defense of the trade routes during the 16th century. When Spain and Portugal finally united under Philip II, Rio de Janeiro became the battleground between the Iberian colonizers and their enemies, the Dutch. By the 17th century gold was discovered in Minas Gerais, and the settlers pushed inland. It was only then that the provincial settlement began to grow. In the 18th century new roads and elaborate churches were built and the bustling city was declared the new capital. Fortifications around the city were beefed up and the great public buildings were built, as Rio became the center of fashion and culture in Brazil. It was around this time that European nobles began planting coffee, helping to develop the interior of the state. The thriving colony became so important to the Portuguese that when the royals fled from Europe to escape the onslaught of Napoleon, they moved to Rio and declared it the capital of their empire.

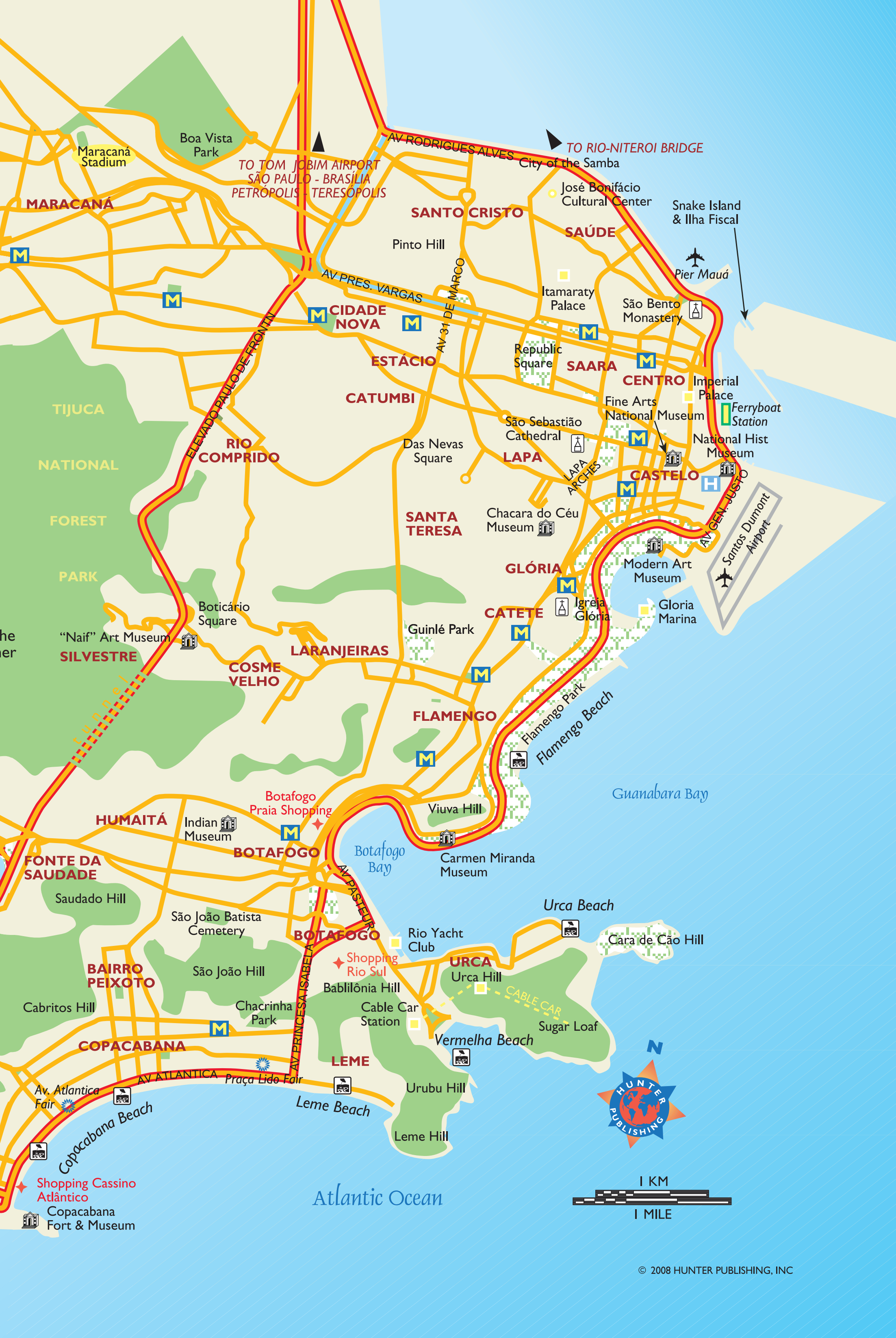
Cariocas, as locals are known, are immensely proud of their "marvelous city" despite its risqué reputation for decadence and well-publicized urban perils. Casual and helpful, if not a bit sly, the locals are relaxed and welcoming to travelers. Rio's main vocation is sports and leisure, and you may notice from the fit and bronzed locals that staying in shape is a way of life. Apart from the beaches and sporting events there is hang-gliding, hiking, biking, climbing or rappelling. For ocean lovers, there is blue marlin fishing off the coast, excursions around the bay and islands, and decent scuba diving minutes from the city. History buffs can explore Colonial fortresses and palaces, or visit the artsy Santa Teresa district for an old-fashioned streetcar ride.

For sightseeing there are options for all tastes and if Rio tends to lack museums and the variety of indoor activies you might expect from a city



Rio de Janeiro & Environs

Belmiro Cave
Paulo &Virginia Cave
Gabriela Fall
Fadas Lake
Mayrink Chapel
Cascatinha Fall
Açude Museum
TO BARRA DA TIJUCA JACAREPAGUÁ
ALTO DA BOA VISTA
Bela Vista Belvedere
USINA
ANDARAÍ
BOREL
MUDA
Golf Club
Beach
Church
Museum
Metro
TIJUCA
NATIONAL
FOREST
PARK
GÁVEA PEQUENA
Emperor's Table
Chinese View
Christ t
Redeem
TO BARRA DA TIJUCA JACAREPAGUÁ
SÃO CONRADO
Museum of the City
Shopping da Gavea
Botanical Gardens
JARDIM BOTÂNICO
São Conrado Shopping Mall
ROCINHA
GÁVEA
Antiques Fair
Babilônia Hype Fair
Jockey Club
Piraqué Island
AUTO-ESTRADA LAGOA BARRA
Av. PREFEITO MENDES DE MORAIS
tunnel
Planetarium
Rodrigo de Freitas Lagoon
São Conrado Beach
ALTO LEBLON
VIDIGAL
LEBLON
Caiçaras Island
Vidigal Beach
Av. DELFIM MOREIRA
Leblon Beach
AV. EPITÁCIO PESSOA
Atlantic Ocean
Cantagalo Hill
IPANEMA
Ipanema Fair
Av. VIEIRA SOUTO
Ipanema Beach
POSTO 6
Arpoador Beach


Maracanã Stadium
Boa Vista Park
TO TOM JOBIM AIRPORT
SÃO PAULO - BRASÍLIA
PETRÓPOLIS - TERESÓPOLIS
AV RODRIGUES ALVES
TO RIO-NITEROI BRIDGE
City of the Samba
José Bonifácio Cultural Center
Snake Island & Ilha Fiscal
MARACANÃ
SANTO CRISTO
SAÚDE
Pinto Hill
Pier Mauá
AV PRES. VARGAS
Itamaraty Palace
São Bento Monastery
CIDADE NOVA
AV 31 DE MARCO
Republic Square
SAARA
ESTÁCIO
CENTRO
Imperial Palace
TIJUCA
CATUMBI
Fine Arts National Museum
Ferryboat Station
ELEVADO PAULO DE FRONTIN
São Sebastião Cathedral
National Hist Museum
NATIONAL
RIO COMPRIDO
Das Nevas Square
LAPA
LAPA ARCHES
CASTELO
AV GEN. JUSTO
FOREST
SANTA TERESA
Chacara do Céu Museum
Santos Dumont Airport
PARK
GLÓRIA
Modern Art Museum
Boticário Square
Igreja Glória
Gloria Marina
"Naif" Art Museum
CATETE
Guinlé Park
SILVESTRE
LARANJEIRAS
COSME VELHO
Tunnel
FLAMENGO
Flamengo Park
Flamengo Beach
Guanabara Bay
Botafogo Praia Shopping
Viuva Hill
HUMAITÁ
Indian Museum
BOTAFOGO
Botafogo Bay
Carmen Miranda Museum
FONTE DA SAUDADE
Saudado Hill
AV PASTEUR
São João Batista Cemetery
Urca Beach
BOTAFOGO
Rio Yacht Club
Cara de Cão Hill
Shopping Rio Sul
URCA
BAIRRO PEIXOTO
São João Hill
Urca Hill
AV PRINCESA ISABELA
Bablilônia Hill
CABLE CAR
Cabritos Hill
Chacrinha Park
Cable Car Station
Sugar Loaf
Vermelha Beach
COPACABANA
LEME
N
AV ATLANTICA
Praça Lido Fair
Av. Atlantica Fair
Urubu Hill
HUNTER PUBLISHING
Leme Beach
Copacabana Beach
Leme Hill
Shopping Cassino Atlântico
Atlantic Ocean
1 KM
1 MILE
Copacabana Fort & Museum
M

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of nine million inhabitants, it more than makes up for it in popular culture like *samba* and *choro*, open-air bars and restaurants and parks.

Most people opt to stay in the upscale Southern Zone, where there are endless options for strolling around to take in the unique atmosphere or heading to the boardwalk to drink a coconut and watch the crowds. Don't miss the world-famous Christ Redeemer monument, which stands with open arms on a mountaintop visible from many points in the city, or the artsy Santa Teresa district where you can travel by old-fashioned cable car. Whatever your tastes, Rio de Janeiro has something for you. *Diverte-se*!

How to Get Here

International flights arrive at **Antonio Jobim Galeão International Airport** (☎ 21-3398-4527) at Ilha do Governador in the Northern Zone.

The best way to get to the Southern Zone from Galeão is by the **Real** air-conditioned bus line that costs a few dollars, stopping all along the beach – just make sure you know the name of the cross-street at your hotel if it's not on the beach so you can tell the driver where to stop. The bus leaves from in front of the terminal every 20 minutes or so but you will need local currency. Ask at the airport info desk if needed.

A common **taxi** (yellow) to the Southern Zone should cost about $30 and take 40 minutes outside rush hour – hail them on the second roadway. The red or blue radio taxis offered by touts, at the booths inside the airport and on the first roadway, are twice as expensive and offer no advantage. To get back to the airport take the Real bus or a cab.

Domestic flights usually land at **Santos Dumont Airport** (☎ 21-3814-7070), downtown. Ignore the taxi touts and booths, and go to the line of common cabs on the right. Cabs to the Southern Zone should cost about $15 and take 25 minutes. There are air-conditioned buses in front for a couple of dollars to that go along the beaches of the Southern Zone. There is generally an official who can orient you, but may not speak English.

There is also an air-conditioned shuttle bus that runs every 20 minutes between the airports from 5:30 am to 8:30 pm.

***Note:** Do not trade money with strangers or accept any help with your bags at the airport except from uniformed porters.*

If you arrive by **bus**, get out at the **Rodoviara Novo Rio** bus station, downtown (☎ 21-3213-1800). Don't stray from the area, as this is a bad neighborhood. Outside to the right are taxis. Find the official at the stand (called a *guichê*) and tell him where you are going. Take the voucher with the written fare (to Ipanema recently cost $5-$10 and takes 20 minutes), give the voucher to your driver and pay when you get out. If you don't have much luggage use the **Real** (☎ 21-2560-7041) buses marked "Leblon," to the right. Fare is about a dollar. A city bus is discouraged if you have luggage, but lines 126, 127, 128, and 136 go to Copacabana or 128, 132, 172 and 173 to Ipanema and Leblon.

If you arrive by **cruise liner**, you will dock downtown. For buses and taxis, cross the street to Praça Mauá (be very careful here at night). On holidays like Carnival there is a special transport system for cruise passengers. When in doubt call **Riotur**, the municipal tour board (☎ 21-2263-4857).

When to Go

The busiest seasons are New Year's Eve and Carnival, but during off-season it is less crowded and cheaper. Rio has an average annual temperature of 75.2°F (24°C). The hot rainy season is in the Brazilian summer from December to March. Summer temperatures can climb above 104°F (40°C) and can drop as low as 59°F (15°C). The dry season is in the winter from June to August, when temperatures range from 53.6°F (12°C) to 86°F (30°C).

As Rio can get hot, lightweight clothing is advised, but you might want a light jacket during the winter season. When going out at night, locals tend to wear jeans. During the day, especially in areas near the beaches, swimwear, tanktops and sandals are fine at most places. The only hard and fast exception is churches or government buildings, where you might not be allowed in with beach wear or anything too skimpy.

Getting Around

Rio is a modern and well-serviced city divided into four main zones (the **Northern Zone**, **Downtown**, the **Southern Zone**, and the **Western Zone** – see *Sightseeing* for more details). Public transport requires patience. Most of the better restaurants and virtually all hotels take credit cards. Locals may not speak English, though in general they are helpful.

Taxis

Taxis are the easiest and safest way to get around. There are two kinds: *taxi comum*, which are yellow, and the more luxurious *radio taxis* that come in various colors.

Dishonest taxi drivers are the number one complaint. You are generally better off hailing a cab than going to taxi stands (the opposite is true in São Paulo). At airports, entertainment zones and hotels, taxi drivers like to shut off the meter and charge gringos a fixed rate. This is illegal. A taxi can only legally take three passengers. At certain times (after 9 pm, on Sundays, holidays and during one month of the year) the meter will display the numeral two (*bandeira dois*) instead of one (*bandeira um*). Drivers sometimes put on *bandeira dois* for baggage which is also illegal. If the meter reads two at any other time, you are getting ripped off and you should politely ask to switch cabs. If you really need to, you can contact the police – all drivers are required to have a photo ID displayed. Don't get in any cab without it.

For common cabs, use **Aerotaxi** (☎ 21-3398-3163). Radio taxis use fixed rates that are about 30% more expensive but offer comfort, are more honest and come to you. These are good radio taxis to choose from: **Cootramo** (☎ 21-3976-9944), **Coopatur** (☎ 21-2573-1009), and **Coopertramo** (☎ 21-2560-2022).

Subway

The **Metrô** (☎ 21-2296-6166) subway is good but limited, except for travel to and from Copacabana and the Downtown areas – this is Line 1. Line 2 runs between Downtown and the Northern Zone and is only useful for getting to Maracanã stadium (see *Sightseeing*). One-way fare was less than a dollar at time of writing. For no extra fee you can get a special ticket to Ipanama (*especial para Ipanema*), getting out at Cardeal Acoverde station (the second to last on the Southern Zone side of Line 1) and hopping on the bus that links to Praça General Osório. The Metrô is open from 6 am to 11 pm every day but Sunday.

Buses

Common buses are not recommended to foreigners. Though cheap, they are uncomfortable, hard to figure out, and are not safe. If you decide to take your chances anyway, the city bus lines all follow the same numbered routes with great frequency. No one is likely to speak English but the conductor is supposed to indicate your stop if you ask. Buses move through stops at a dangerous speed, and pickpockets are common.

Larger **executive buses** (called *frescão),* with air-conditioning, are a different story. These are recommended if you know your surroundings and can speak a little Portuguese. They cost only a few dollars. When you board, tell the driver your stop. These buses run from the Centro (at Avenida Rio Branco) to the Southern Zone (Copacabana, Ipanema, and Leblon) and back.

Vans

Privately owned vans follow the bus routes and are not recommended unless you speak a little Portuguese. They move fast and you need to know where you are going, plus there is little room for luggage. The vans marked "Castello" and "Assembleia" follow the beach through Leblon, Ipanema and Copacabana, stopping in the Centro downtown (and vice versa). They cost about a dollar; pay when you get out. To hail the driver pinch your fingers together rapidly when he approaches – if he sees you he will flash his headlights.

Note: though very rare, there have been incidents in the past of "fake" vans kidnapping and robbing tourists. Verify that there is a clearly printed card in the front windshield. These criminals are typically young men. Legitimate vans should have both women and executive passengers and, while far from a foolproof sign, 90% of the drivers ride with their girlfriend or a kid beside them to open the door and handle the money. If in doubt, just wag your finger side to side and don't board.

Driving

Driving in town is not advised. Rio's drivers are insane, the routes are confusing, and parking is hectic. Worse, *flanelinhas*, or roadside extortionists, appear when you park and demand cash to "protect" it. Look for the municipal parking attendants in green and white vests, who will give you a slip of paper to display on your dashboard. A car can be useful for travel outside the city. At Tom Jobim International Airport, try **Avis** (☎ 21-3398-5060), **Hertz** (☎ 21-3398-4338), **Localiza** (☎ 21-3398-5489), or **Unidas** (☎ 21-3398-3452). At Santos Dumont Airport, try **Avis** (☎ 21-3814-7378), or **Localiza** (☎ 21-2220-5455).

For More Information

The **Riotour** tour board has an English language hotline (☎ 21-2542-8080), and a website with information about the city at www.rio.rj.gov.br/riotur. Riotur's *Rio Incomparável* is a booklet with bus schedules, lodging and entertainment listings, and other information. Ask for a free city map at their main office at Rua da Assembléia 10 (9th floor) in the Centro or the office in Copacabana at Avenida Princesa Isabel 183. Riotur also has booths at the Rodoviario Novo Rio and the International Airport to help with hotel reservations.

The **Hotel Association h**as started distributing a pamphlet with safety tips, available at your hotel. If you drive, it is indispensible to buy the *4 Rodas Rio de Janeiro map and street guide* at any newsstand. For current city nightlife offerings, check the ***Jornal do Brasil*** newspaper on Fridays, or ***O Globo*** on Saturday. The weekly magazine ***Veja*** has excellent listings and is highly recommended if you can decipher the Portuguese.

Services for Travelers

You can get cash at the airport ATMs (Banco do Brasil or Bradesco Banco 24 Horas) on the third floor. If that fails, trade currency at the Banco do Brasil office nearby – they close at 10 pm and charge a higher rate. Citibank and HSBC ATMs around town usually work for Cirrus, Plus or Maestro. Exchange bureaux are sprinkled through the city, with better rates than the banks, along Avenida Rio Branco in the Centro, Nossa Senhora de Copacabana, or Avenida Visconde de Pirajá (try the little shopping centers) in the Southern Zone. Travel agencies in the same areas also trade cash or travelers checks. Finer establishments accept credit cards.

Helpful and friendly **Ana Emília Meireles**, Portuguese teacher, offers a highly recommended course on communicating in shops, taxis and restaurants, and can arrange longer-term stays and help in adapting to Brazil. Her site is www.portuguesecourse.com.br.

Staying Safe

The listings in this chapter were chosen with your well-being in mind. Rio can be dangerous but most of the violence is associated with the drug trade and is concentrated in areas not easily accessed by tourists. Robberies, rip-offs, cons, and petty theft, however, are common.

Don't fool yourself into thinking that you "blend in" because chances are you don't – Cariocas can spot a tourist in two seconds even if you use local team shirts or other disguises. Staying in groups may seem tacky but its a good way to see the downtown area or Tijuca Forest, for example. In the Southern Zone it is safer but in certain neighborhoods like Copacabana you must be more careful.

Avoid people who approach you with friendly banter in English – Cariocas are friendly, but well meaning people rarely do this (in certain settings like bars, it may be different).

Foreigners are often overcharged (and locals too), so always check your bill.

Many tourists robbed in Copacabana or Downtown are victims of street kids, often high on paint thinner fumes they inhale to kill their hunger. While children, they can be extremely dangerous and should always be avoided. Armed robbery by adults is less common but does occur, and there is not much you can do, but avoid carrying valuables.

The other common category is crime of opportunity, where people get distracted and leave things sitting around where they can be grabbed. Be careful with your credit cards, and stay alert when entering and leaving bank machines.

Less common for tourists are car-jackings but there is a risk on major thoroughfares at night or around intersections where cars tend to stop. Keep your windows rolled up in taxis.

It is a good idea to take a taxi or the subway, especially at night. Also, when crossing the street, be careful as drivers are often not paying attention and may blow right through a red light.

Be especially alert to scams at the airports and other touristy zones – don't let anyone hustle you and don't let anyone handle your bags.

Prostitution is a generally legal activity that carries its own risks. Hotel staff are trained to ask for IDs to protect their guests.

Drugs are not hard to find in Rio, but travelers can get set up, sent to jail, robbed, or worse.

If you have any problems, seek out the **Tourist Police** at Avenida Afrânio de Melo Franco in Leblon (☎ 21-3399-7170, 21-2511-5112, or 21-2511-5767). For general **police emergencies** dial 190, but English may not be spoken.

Tour guides can be helpful. **Carlos Roquette** specializes in cultural tours, is fluent in English and French. He also offers cultural trips outside Rio (☎ 21-9911-3829). **Milton Teixeira** is internationally recognized for his knowledge of Rio de Janeiro but only conducts tours in English via an interpreter (☎ 21-2527-9129 or 21-9952-2789).

Festivals & Events

★★★Carnival

For the sheer beauty and fun of Carnival, Rio de Janeiro is second to none, though Salvador is a close runner up. The epicenter of the party is the **Sambadrome**, where dancers in sumptuous nothings march and dance among allegorical floats that each tell a story. There is a very long tradition of this and there is intense competition among competing "samba schools" to be declared that year's champions.

Some Cariocas live for Carnival, and preparations begin months in advance.

While the Sambadrome gets the most press, these pre-Carnival events are the best parties. In the weeks and months before the parades there are lively group rehersals at the samba schools amid intense gossip and speculation about who will be participating in what schools and who might become the Carnival King and Queen of each school.

About a month before the big event, excitement really starts to build and participants in the parades purchase their costumes, which are only worn once and can be quite expensive.

Carnival street parade at Sambadrome

BLOCOS: CARNIVAL IN THE NEIGHBORHOODS

Also during this time, there are neighborhood rehearsals, called *ensaios*, of neighborhood parties called *blocos*. These are major parties with confetti, streamers and a really wild atmosphere where entire neighborhoods shut down and thousands of people scream and dance behind a slow-moving sound truck while musicians bring them to a boil with provocative lyrics that change every year.

These blocos are free and are one of the oldest Carnival traditions. The best for tourists are **Monobloco** in Gávea, **Suvaco de Cristo** in Jardim Botanico, **Simpatia é Quase Amor** in Ipanema, all in the **Southern Zone**. Most people buy a teeshirt but you don't need one, and most also wear some kind of costume. As with any party where there is a mix of all kinds of people, plus the general excesses of Carnival, misunderstandings can occur. Both women and men are subject to very aggressive flirtation and a lot of physical contact. Try not to take it too seriously – just disappear in the crowd if it bothers you.

Right before Carnival, there is a dress rehearsal at the Sambadrome, and the whole country watches floats and costumes, the innovation and execution of the theme, the beauty and sensuality of the dancers, and the coordination of the whole ensemble. Speculation runs wild about who will be the winner, and televisions blare samba themes and round-the-clock images of whirling mulatas – the top symbol of Carnival.

The frenzy builds downtown at the Terreirao do Samba square and rages full-steam through three unforgettable nights of Carnival. Consecutive shows of Brazilian popular music and samba take place on the main stage to the hypnotic thunder of drums, while kiosks and wandering merchants stoke up the crowd with food, beer, and *cachaça*. The climax is the parade itself, on Sunday and Monday, with seven schools in each wave. The largest and most spectacular parades are in the Special Group, followed by the A and B Groups, each with thousands of participants. Many celebrities appear, and the gossip columns buzz wickedly about their lives, loves and liposuctions as they parade in naked glory.

SAMBA SCHOOLS: TAKING FRIVOLITY SERIOUSLY

For authentic Carnival samba, the samba schools are your best introduction. They open to the public around October and are busiest after New Year's, when they get so crowded it is almost not worth the trouble unless you are dying to go. Each school secretly plans its theme, usually a social or political statement on what the media talked about during the previous year. The instant the drums begin, the crowd comes alive and begins jumping and dancing, passing around pamphlets with

the words of this year's samba that fans hope will bring their favorite school victory in the intense competition ahead.
These *ensaios* take place generally on weekends in or near the *favelas* (which are safe to visit during the festivities, but you should take a taxi). It costs under $10 to get in. Gringos will be best served at **Acadêmicos de Salgueiro**, on Rua Silva Teles, 104 in Andaraí, known by the red and white color scheme (☎ 21-2238-6440) and **Estação Primeira de Mangueira**, on Rua Visconde de Niterói, 1072, under the Agenor de Oliveira viaduct, which uses pink and green (☎ 21-2567-4637). Both are in the Northern Zone. Contact the school directly, look in the newspaper, or get advice from **Riotur** for times and locations. This is also how you join the Carnival parade if you want to march, but you will have to buy a costume (*fantasia*) that can cost several hundred dollars.

TICKETS & SEATING

Tickets can be hard to get close to the event. Contact **Riotur** or a travel agent for where to get tickets (locations vary). Or take your chances with the scalpers. Tickets are normally not issued until right before the event, but they should be reserved in advance. In general, there are five classes of seating. In total, there are usuall some 40,000 spectators.

Besides the Sambadrome or the blocos, all around the city there are parties. At the **Hotel Gloria**, on Saturday afternoon, there is a costume competition with huge and dazzling costumes. Themed masacarade balls are luxurious, libidinous events which run the gamut of price and taste for the well-dressed and the well-undressed. They start late and party through the night, often with a step price tag. The **Magic Ball** at the **Copacabana Palace Hotel** is the most elegant, with a black tie costume ball that lacks for nothing, while the **Claro Hall** in the **Western Zone** has a similar one. Fleshlier balls are held at the **Clube Monte Libano** (☎ 21-3239-0032), the **Scala** in Leblon, the **Canecão** in Botafogo, with less elegance and more body paint (see *Where to Go Out*), or way down the scale at **Help!**, in Copacabana (The Grande G ball here is a gay affair, but the others are not). The balls are triumphs of bacchanalian excess, and inside just about anything goes.

★★★New Year's Eve

Next to Carnival, New Year's Eve is the most important celebration, with millions of people gathered on the city's beaches for a joyous celebation. There are free shows in Ipanema, Leblon, Flamengo, Barra da Tijuca, Guaratiba, Sepetiba, Ilha do Governador and Paqueta Island, but the biggest and best is on Copacabana Beach.

In Copacabana alone, two million people flock to the 2½ miles of beaches, with fireworks, live music and dancing on the sand. While crowded, the beauty of the event is that everybody gets along. The hotels lining the beach display cascading waterfalls of sparkles down the sides of the buildings and hold elegant dinners for their guests. The streets build with energy as total strangers of every race or class celebrate together, some in tuxedos, some in beach sandals, some in both, and practically everybody dressed in either white, red or yellow, depending on their wishes for peace, love or money. As midnight draws closer, the crowd streams toward the epicenter of the commotion on the beach.

Millions perform a ritual offering to *Yemanjá*, the *candomblé* Queen of the Sea. Women stand at the waterline and toss white lilies out to sea, jumping seven times over the waves or eating seven grapes. All along the beach, people dig tiny shelters in the sand for white candles, leaving flowers and opening bottles of champagne in offering, dotting the beach with a thousand tiny shrines (watch where you are going). At midnight the crowd roars and dances, spraying each other with champagne as the lights from the fireworks blaze overhead.

Sightseeing

Downtown

Downtown includes the Centro, Santa Teresa, Lapa, and Gloria neighborhoods. Most of the city's museums and historic landmarks are here.

The **Centro** is a commercial and business district. Visit by day during the week, as the area empties out and is unsafe on weekends (except for Lapa and Santa Teresa). A city tour is a good way to see the main urban landmarks. Policing here has been beefed up recently but you still need to be careful. To get downtown, take a taxi, bus or subway from the Southern Zone (taxis are recommended at night).

Lapa is adjacent to the business district, with famous nightlife and street culture. The main landmark is a 250-year-old aquaduct now used as an elevated rail (see *Adventures*). Once a red light district, the area is important in the city's folklore, especially around Carnival.

Santa Teresa is next to Lapa, with a hilly maze of cobbled streets and cable cars. One of the most scenic neighborhoods, Santa Teresa was once the most affluent part of town, but today the neighborhood is generally poor, with dilapidated old mansions occupied by foreigners, artists, and bohemians. Go during the day to Largo dos Guimarães, the main square where there are some recommended restaurants. Once a year on an irregular schedule from September to November, the many art studios in people's homes open to visits in an event called **Arte de Portas Abertas**, a tradition for nearly two decades. Getting here is easiest by taxi, or by the *bonde* from the station at the Centro.

A bit farther away is **Gloria**, a chic suburb in the 19th century that has also seen better days. Not far from here you can have lunch at Rio's most famous restaurant, **Porcão** (see *Where to Eat*). Visit the historic **Church of Gloria Hill**, located on the hill where the Portuguese routed the French. Access is via bus, subway, or taxi.

Historic Landmarks

★The **Municipal Theatre** (Teatro Municipal), from 1909, is one of the most important buildings in the city. Built as a miniature replica of the Paris Opera House, the venue hosts Rio's best ballet, opera and classical music. Bilingual guided visits available Monday through Friday 10 am to 6 pm, and Saturdays from noon to show time. It is at Cinelândia Square, a subway stop in the Centro (☎ 21-2299-1717).

MUSICA
MCMVI-MCMIX
POESIA
THEATRO MUNICIPAL

Municipal Theatre

Quinze de Novembro Square (Praça XV de Novembro) was once a mangrove swamp and its Imperial Palace (Paço Imperial) was built on landfill in 1743. This is where Princess Isabel signed the Aurea Law abolishing slavery in 1888. The palace opens Tuesday through Sunday from noon to 6 pm (☎ 21-2533-4470 or 21-2533-0964). The Fountain of Mestre Valentim outside the palace was once the main source of water for the city.

The **Royal Portuguese Reading Room** has the largest collection of Portuguese literature outside Europe. Built in 1837, the library's woodwork, stained-glass dome and magnificent wrought iron are worth a look. Open Monday through Friday 9 am to 6 pm. Located at Rua Luis de Camoes, 30 in the Centro (☎ 21-2221-3138 or 21-2221-2960).

★The **Arches of Lapa** (Arcos da Lapa) is a famous landmark in Lapa. Built in

The Arches of Lapa

1750, the aquaduct was one of the most sophisticated infrastructure works in Brazil at the time. There are a huge number of bars, restaurants and dance halls nearby. See *Where to Go Out* for more details on Lapa's nightlife.

Museums

★★The **Bank of Brazil Cultural Center** (Centro Cultural Banco do Brasil), built in 1806, has rotating exhibits. The gorgeous marble hall is a way to beat the heat. Open Tuesday through Sunday 10 am to 8 pm. Located at Rua 1 de Março, 66 in the Centro (☎ 21-2808-2217, 21-2808-2218 or 21-3828-2020).

★★The 1820 **France-Brazil House** (Casa França-Brasil) next door has one of Rio's best gallery spaces. In the old port district, it is one of the earliest neoclassical structures in Brazil. Open Tuesday through Sunday noon to 8 pm on Rua Visconde de Itaboraí, 78, in the Centro (☎ 21-2253-5366).

★The **National Fine Arts Museum** (Museu Nacional de Belas Artes) has a good collection of European, African and Brazilian art, including a Rodin, etchings, sacred art, antiques, and oil paintings. Some have very sensual themes, like *The Carioca* by Vitor Meirelles, considered shockingly libidinous for the day. Entrance is free on Sunday. The museum is at Avenida Rio Branco, 199, in the Centro and opens from 10 am to 6 pm Monday through Friday, and from 2 to 6 pm on weekends (☎ 21-2240-0068).

The Modern Art Museum

(Riotour)

★The **Modern Art Museum** (**MAM**) has a small collection with a landscaped park by Burle Marx and a view of the Guanabara Bay. First built in 1952, a fire destroyed hundreds of priceless works. Rebuilt, it has almost 2,000 paintings, sculptures and etchings. At Avenida Infante Dom Henrique 85 in the Centro, it opens Tuesday through Sunday from noon to 6 pm and to 8 pm on Thursday (☎ 21-2210-2188).

The **National History Museum** (Museu Historico Nacional) dates from the 17th century, with various additions over the years. One of Brazil's most important museums, it is on Praça Marechal Ancora (no number) in the Centro. Open Tuesday through Friday from 10 am to 5:30 pm, weekends from 2 to 6 pm (☎ 21-2250-9255 or 21-2550-9220).

The **Navy Cultural Center** (Espaço Cultural da Marinha) in the port district has a meticulously restored Imperial ship, a 1943 US torpedo boat, a submarine from 1973, and a 1910 high-seas tugboat. From here, take a short boat ride to Fiscal Island, with a tiny palace built by Emperor Pedro II (see *Adventures*). The Center is at Avenida Alfredo

Agache, and opens Tuesday through Sunday from noon to 5 pm (☎ 21-2104-6191).

The **Naval History Museum** is nearby at Rua Dom Manuel 15, open daily from noon to 4:15 pm (☎ 21-2533-7626).

The **Benjamin Constant House Museum** (Museu Casa de Benjamin Constant) is a century-old estate of the Brazilian statesman located in Santa Teresa, with an arboretum that opens daily from 8 am to 6 pm. The museum opens Thursday through Sunday 1-5 pm, with guided tours. It is at Rua Monte Alegre, 255 (☎ 21-2509-1248 or 21-2242-0062).

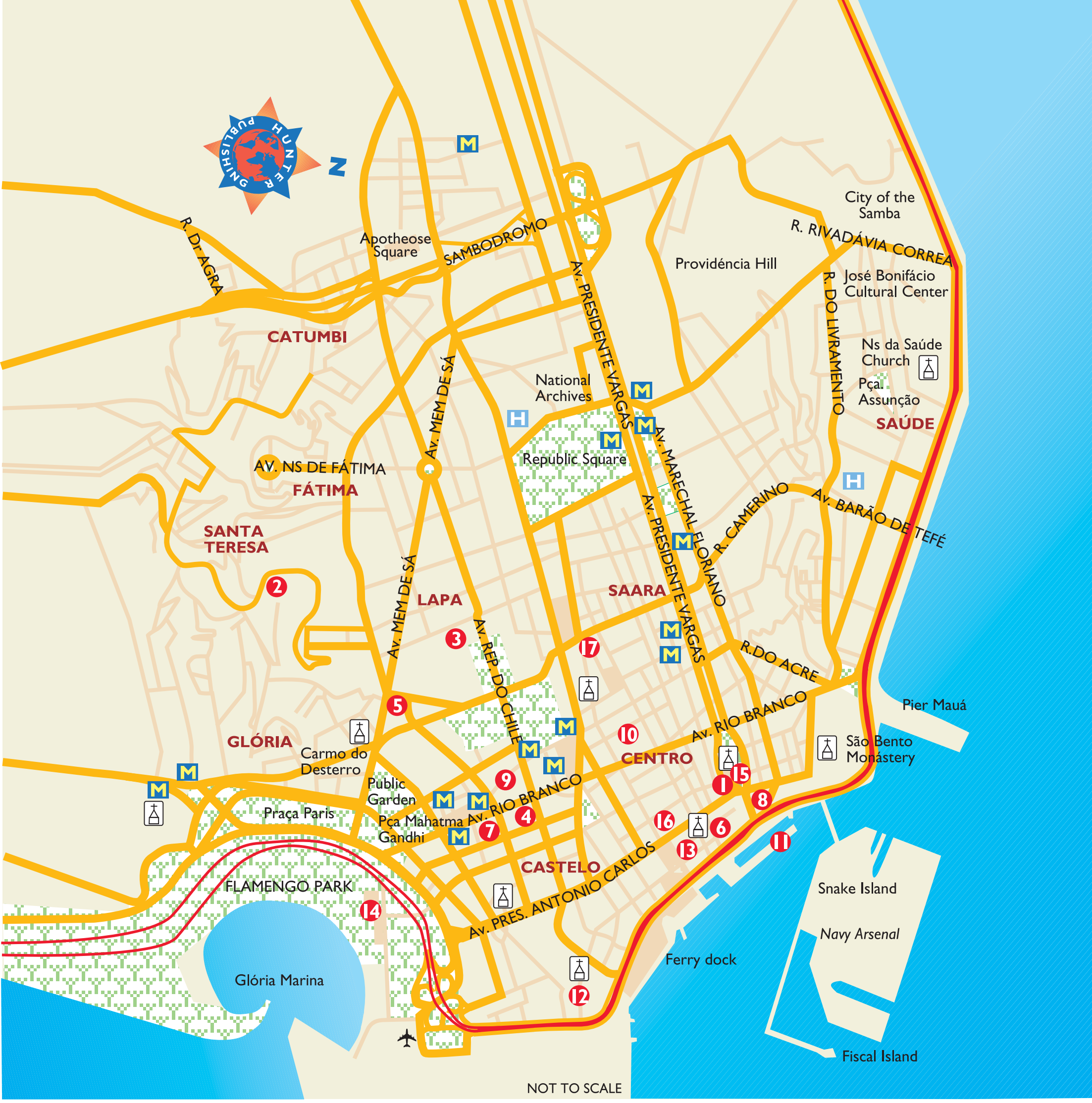
Chácara do Céu is a small museum in an old mansion with landscaped grounds in Santa Teresa. This was once a great museum, but it lost some major works to an armed robbery. Next door is the **Park of the Ruins Cultural Center** (Centro Cultural Parque das Ruínas), once the residence of a prominent socialite, that burned down. The ruins have been turned into a cultural center with a great view of the city. Sundays at 6 pm there are free music concerts and dancing with a local crowd. The best way to get here is by taxi, though you might have to call one from the museum to get back, or arrange to have the driver wait for an hour or two. It is on Rua Murtinho Nobre 169 (☎ 21-2252-1039 or 21-2252-0112).

Historic Churches

★★The **Church of Nossa Senhora de Candelaria** at Praça Pio X in the Centro is one of largest and most sumptuous historic churches in Rio. It was built in 1630, then was expanded in 1890, opening weekdays from 7:30 am-noon and 1-4 pm (☎ 21-2233-2324).

★★The **Church of the Third Order of Carmo** (Igreja da Ordem Terceira do Carmo) began as a convent in 1648, and was expanded in 1770. Once known as the Imperial Church, it was used for the coronation of Emperors Pedro I and Pedro II. It is on Rua 1 de Março in the Centro, open Monday through Saturday 8 am-6 pm (☎ 21-2242-7766).

The **Metropolitan Cathedral** in the Centro is a modern church built in 1976. This grey pyramid with bands of concrete is unsightly from the outside but inside has a striking color scheme of stained glass. A sacred art museum in an annex allows visits by appointment only (☎ 21-2240-2669). The cathedral is next to the towering black Petrobras building on Avenida Republica da Chile 245 in the Centro, with visits from 8 am-noon and 1-6 pm. It is not far from the Santa Teresa bonde station.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Centro Histórico

⛪ Church
M Metro

1. Banco do Brasil Cultural Center
2. Chacara do Ceu Museum
3. Sáo Sebastião Cathedral
4. National Fine Arts Museum
5. Lapa Arches
6. Teles Arch
7. National Library
8. France Brasil House
9. Municipal Theater
10. Colombo Tea House & Restaurant
11. Navy Cultural Center
12. National History Museum
13. Imperial Palace
14. Modern Art Museum
15. Candelaria Church
16. Carmo Church
17. Royal Portuguese Library
18. Joáo Caetano Theater
19. Das Neves Square
20. Itamaraty Palace

Close by, the ★★**Church of Our Lady of Carmo of the Ancient See** (Igreja da Nossa Senhora do Carmo da Antiga Se) began with a chapel in 1590. A church was built over the original chapel in 1761. The royals had their religious ceremonies here during the Empire. At the time of writing, restoration was underway. Open Monday through Friday 8 am-noon. It is at Rua 1 de Março, on the corner of Rua 7 de Setembro in the Centro (☎ 21-2242-4828).

★★**Sao Bento Monastary** on São Bento hill is a Roccoco-style monestary built from 1617 to 1802, employing the best painters, architects and builders of the period. Gregorian chants are sung every day at 4 am and 5 pm, and on Sunday at 10 am (get there a half-hour early on Sunday because of the crowds). Open daily 7-11 am and 2:30-6 pm. It is at Rua Dom Gerardo, 68 in the Centro (☎ 21-2291-7122).

★The **Church of Gloria** (Igreja de Outeiro de Gloria) is on the hill where the final battle between the French invaders and the Portuguese took place in 1565. Built between 1730 and 1750, the church is one of the most important religious buildings in Brazil. To get there, get out at the Gloria subway stop and climb the staircase up the hill to Praça Nossa Senhora da Gloria 135. Open Monday through Friday 9 am to noon and 1 to 5 pm, weekends from 8 am-noon (☎ 21-2225-2869).

AFTERNOON TEA: A CARIOCA TRADITION

Rio de Janeiro has pleasant afternoon teas (*chá da tarde*) popular with socialites. This is a great way to refresh yourself in style and a side of Rio often overlooked by travelers. The **Copacabana Palace Hotel** and its chic poolside ★★**Cipriani** restaurant serves tea ($$$) with Russian delicacies such as caviar, sour cream, boursin cheese, duck and authentic blinis, plus a variety of sandwiches, such as smoked salmon, goat cheese, cucumber, egg salad, and watercress with fresh buffalo cheese and tomato. Afterwards, try the scones, fruitcake, croissants, tiramissu, lemon tarts, or sorbet. Served Monday through Friday from 3:30 to 6 pm. Located at Avenida Atlantica, 1702 (☎ 21-2548-7070).

★**Salon D'Or** has tea ($$$-$$$$), along with French cuisine in an elegant setting. The crowd can be snobby though – no beachwear allowed. Located at Praia do Flamengo 340 in the Flamengo neighborhood, at the Julieta de Serpa Cultural Center (Casa de Arte e Cultura Julieta de Serpa). Open Tuesday through Sunday from 4 to 7 pm (☎ 21-2551-1278).

Downtown, there are excellent and inexpensive teas ($$) at the **Banco do Brazil Cultural Center** (see *Sightseeing*), and at the

Brazilian Academy of Letters (Academia Brasileira de Letras) that can be a perfect option after a long day of sightseeing. The latter is at 5 pm on Thursdays in the so-called "Petit Trianon" building. Open Monday through Wednesday, 2-4 pm. It's on Avenida Presidente Wilson, 203, ☎ 21-2524-8230. The historic landmark and restaurant ★★**Confeitaria Colombo** has afternoon tea ($$$) with live music. It can get crowded. They are at Rua Gonçalves Dias, 32 (☎ 21-2232-2300).

Sightseeing in the Southern Zone

Most travelers spend their time in the Southern Zone. This modern and sophisticated part of town has the best beaches, hotels, restaurants, shopping and nightlife. This is also where you will find many of the adventures listed in this chapter such as the Tijuca forest, hang-gliding from Pedra Bonita, not to mention the world-famous Christ the Redeemer and Sugar Loaf landmarks.

The fashionable neighborhoods are Leblon and Ipanema along the beach. Jardim Botânico and Gavea are near the forested areas and the secluded Lagoa neighborhood with its lagoon and park. Adjacent to these neighborhoods is Copacabana, the most famous (perhaps infamous) neighborhood in Brazil. Urca is a scenic residential neighborhood on a spur of rock projecting into the Bay, not far from the middle-class neighborhoods of Botafogo, Flamengo and Catete. Inland there are the hilly residential neighborhoods of Laranjeiras and Cosme Velho.

Landmarks

Christ the Redeemer Statue

★★★**Corcovado**, or "Hunchback" mountain has an incredible panoramic view from its 2,329-foot elevation. Recently built escalators make it easy to approach **Christ the Redeemer**, a 105-foot concrete statue. Built in 1931 by the architect Silva Costa and sculptor Paul Landowski, the statue is second in size only to New York's Statue of Liberty. It can be viewed from many points in the city. The tram going up is an adventure in itself, careening at a steep angle through the forest. Departures are every half-hour from Rua Cosme Velho, 513, in Cosme Velho (adjacent to Laranjeiras). You can drive or take a taxi to the park entrance by following the signs through the Tijuca Forest, but the tram is recommended for safety, fun and convenience. Open daily 8:30 am-6:30 pm (☎ 21-2558-1650 or 21-2558-1329).

★★★**Sugar Loaf** (Pão de Açucar) is an oblique slab of rock jutting up from the Atlantic. Access is by the cable car used to film the 1979 James Bond film *Moonraker.* The trip includes two swift rides every half-hour, the first from ground level to Morro de Urca, and the second to the top of the Sugar Loaf. There is an amazing view of the city and harbor. Access is via taxi on Avenida Pasteur, 520 in Urca. Opens 8 am-10 pm every day (☎ 21-2546-8400).

Cable car to Sugar Loaf Mountain

Parks

Lage Park (Parque Lage) is a smaller private park a short walk from the Botanical Gardens. It has one of the only remaining enclaves of native Atlantic Forest in the city, with trails, grottoes and lakes under Corcovado mountain and the Christ Redeemer statue. Located on Rua Jardim Botânico, 514, it opens daily 7 am-5 pm (☎ 21-2530-5065).

Rodrigo de Freitas Lagoon (or simply the "Lagoa"), is surrounded by a 5.7-mile/9½-km paved path with shady areas and kiosks. On the east side, you can rent pedal Swan-boats for a few dollars, but swimming is a definitely out due to pollution. Adjacent to Leblon, Ipanema, Jardim Botânico and the beaches, the park is well policed. Around 4 pm until late, lots of people meet for drinks and snacks at the **kiosks** on the West Side (see *Where to Go Out*). Any taxi driver can take you or you can enter on foot from Leblon or Ipanema.

★★The **Botanical Gardens** (Jardim Botânico) is one of the largest botany collections in Brazil. The park dates from 1808 with a towering row of Imperial Palms alongside the main road planted in 1809. There are bromelias, cacti, orchids, a Japanese garden and a Colonial gunpowder factory. Entrance costs under $2. Open daily 8 am-5 pm at Rua Jardim Botânico 1006 in the Jardim Botânico neighborhood (☎ 21-2294-6012, 21-2294-9349 or 21-2239-1497).

Inside the Botanical Gardens

Flamengo Park (Parque de Flamengo) is one of the world's largest urban parks built in the 1960s by the Brazilian architect Burle Marx. The view of the bay is one of the best in the city. Unfortunately, it is not safe here, but you will pass the park by taxi from the Centro to the Southern Zone. The park is at Rua Infante D. Henique (or Aterro), no number, in Flamengo (☎ 21-2285-5708 or 21-2205-0763).

Historic Fortresses

★**Copacabana Fortress** has walls 40 feet thick and was built in 1914. Inside are German Krupp guns and a military history museum, and outside is a great view of the bay. The entrance is on Praça Coronel Eugenio Franco 1 in Copacabana. Open Tuesday through Sunday 10 am to 4 pm (☎ 21-2521-1032).

Duque de Caxias Fortress was built in 1779. Deactivated in 1965, it used to house the Royal Dragoons who guarded the emperor's gold. There is still a military school. From here there is a great view of the bay's entrance and important landmarks. On Sundays there are guided walking tours. In Leme at Praça Almirante Julio de Noronha, it opens Saturday and Sunday from 9 am to 4 pm (☎ 21-2275-7696 or 21-3661-5679).

Museums

The Art Naif Museum

★The **Art Naif Museum** has several thousand naif works, one of the largest collections in the world. The collection also includes indigenous Brazilian art. The museum was once the studio of Brazilian artist Eliseu Visconti. It is in Cosme Velho, one block from the **Corcovado Tram**. Open Tuesday through Friday 10 am-6 pm, Saturday and Sunday noon – 6 pm. www.museunaif.com.br, ☎ 21-2205-8612.

The **Edson Carneiro Folklore Museum** (Museu de Folclore Edson Carneiro) has exhibits on Brazilian culture. Housed in adjacent 18th-century townhouses on Rua do Catete, 181 close to the Catete subway stop, it opens Tuesday through Friday from 11 am to 6 pm, weekends and holidays 3-6 pm (☎ 21-2285-0441).

★★The **Museum of the Republic** (Museu da República, at right) is an important landmark. Also called Catete Palace, this was the federal government palace from 1897 to 1960, and the location of Getúlio Vargas' suicide. Entrance is free on Wednesday, and twice per month there are classical music concerts. The restaurant is good for lunch. Next door to the Catete subway stop on Rua do Catete 153, it opens Tuesday through Friday from noon to 5 pm and on weekends and holidays from 2 to 6 pm (☎ 21-2558-6350).

★The **Indigenous Museum** (Museu do Índio), built in 1880, has one of the most important Native American collections in Latin America. In the garden, there are replicas of prayer lodges and homes in natural size built by indigenous groups. Located at Rua da Palmeiras, 55, in Botafogo, it opens Tuesday through Friday 10 am-5 pm, and weekends from 1 to 5 pm (www.museudoindio.org.br, ☎ 21-2286-8899).

Exhibit in The Indigenous Museum

The **Rui Barbosa House** (Casa de Rui Barbosa) was the home of the famous writer, jurist, and statesman. The 1849 mansion has theme rooms he himself designed, with a nice park outside. It is in Botafogo, at Rua Sao Clemente, 134. Open Tuesday through Friday 9 am to 6 pm, weekends and holidays from 2 pm to 5 pm (www.casaruibarbosa.gov.br, ☎ 21-2537-0036 or 21-2537-8424).

The **Villa-Lobos Museum** (Museu Villa-Lobos) is dedicated to the Brazilian composer Heitor Villa-Lobos. It is located in the Botafogo neighborhood, on Rua Sorocaba, 200, and opens Monday through Friday from 10 am to 5:30pm (☎ 21-2266-3845).

Cultural Center

Laura Alvim Cultural Center (Casa de Cultura Laura Alvim) in a small refurbished mansion on the beach in Ipanema, is a fun little center for the arts. It has a theater, shows, and courses in languages and the arts. The patio has a gallery for rotating expositions, and there is film showing room, a coffee shop and a gift shop. It is at Avenida Viera Souto, 174, and opens Tuesday through Sunday 10 am-10 pm (☎ 21-2287-2285).

Sightseeing in the Western Zone

The Western Zone is a relatively recent area. The beaches are great here but hard to reach, but there are excellent shopping centers and nightlife. You can get here by taxi, but it will be a bit expensive. Heading west out of the Southern Zone, you will pass by São Conrado where Latin America's largest favelas, Rocinha and Vidigal, are located. In the neighborhood called Barra da Tijuca there are many shopping centers. Farther on there is Jacarepaguá (where the airport for skydiving is located – see *Adventures*), Vargem Grande with its horseback riding, Barra de Guaratiba, where the Burle Marx Homestead is, and the beaches of Pedra Guaratiba and Grumari. Close to the Northern Zone is the residential area called Alto de Boa Vista, where you can also enter the Tijuca National Park.

Museums

The **Açude Museum** is an old mansion with a small collection of arts and antiques, including Ming ceramics from China. The grounds are the main appeal. On the final Sunday of every month there is a ★**Cultural Brunch** with outdoor catering. Make special arrangements for a taxi to wait for you as the museum is out of the way. In Alto de Boa Vista, it opens Thursday through Sunday 11 am-5 pm (☎ 21-2492-5543).

★★★**Burle Marx Homestead** (Sítio Burle Marx), in Barra de Guaratiba, is distant but highly recommended. A tropical oasis created by famous landcaper Burle Marx, this was his love letter to Brazil. In the grounds of an 18th-century homestead that he bought in 1949, he created a botanical museum and filled it with eccentric paintings and artwork that he himself made or collected over 20 years. Guided visits must be scheduled beforehand in groups up to 25 people. Open Tuesday through Saturday 9 am-1:30 pm. You will probably need a taxi to get there, but you can reduce the cost (around $25 each way) by taking a bus to one of the shopping centers in Barra de Tijuca, and from there taking a taxi. It is on the Estrada de Barra de Guaratiba, 2019 (☎ 21-2410-1412 or 21-2410-1171).

Sightseeing in the Northern Zone

This is the least touristed section of town. There are mostly working class and middle class families living in the Northern Zone, but it contains one of Brazil's best public universities. Also here is the world's largest stadium, Maracanã, and the recommended São Cristóvão Northeastener Fair (see *Where to Go Out*).

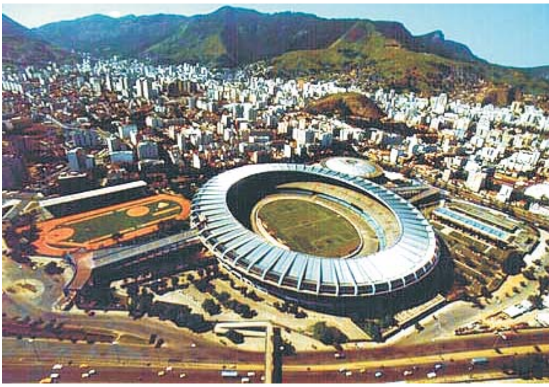
Museums

The **National Museum** (Museu Nacional) was once a wealthy merchant's residence donated in 1808 to the royals. Exhibits include natural history, indigenous objects, archeology, classical antiquity, and geology. The building once served as a barracks, school, and the very first assembly hall of the constitutional government, with a garden planted by Emperor Dom Pedro II, who was a botanist. Open Tuesday through Sunday from 10 am to 4 pm, at

Avenida Dom Pedro II (no number) in Quinta de Boa Vista (☎ 21-2568-8262).

The **Museum of the First Kingdom** (Museu do Primerio Reinado), in the Sao Cristóvão neighborhood, was the home of the Marquise of Santos. She and Emperor Dom Pedro I met here during their scandalous love affair that ended when his wife Dona Leopoldina died in 1826, and Dom Pedro I sent the Marquise de Santos away to marry another. It is at Avenida Dom Pedro II, 293, and is open Tuesday through Friday from 11 am to 5 pm (☎ 21-2589-9627).

Sports



Maracanã Stadium was built for the World Cup games in 1950 and hosted the electrifying final match between Brazil and Uruguay. At one time the stadium held 200,000 spectators, making this it the world's largest soccer stadium. Games are not for the faint of heart, as the crowd can be rough. To get there, take the subway along Line 1 to Estácio station, then transfer to Line 2 (heading toward Maria da Graça), and get out at Maracanã station. It's very busy on game day so you might opt for taxi.

EXPLORING THE TIJUCA FOREST NATIONAL PARK

★★Tijuca Forest National Park (Floresta de Tijuca) looks like original rainforest but it was actually planted in the early 19th century. At the time, European nobles had planted coffee here, which altered the watersheds and began causing terrible droughts in the city. It got so bad that at one point there were riots in Praça Quinze.

Emperor Dom Pedro II ordered the forest to be replanted in 1861. Over the next 40 years, thousands of trees were planted, including many imported species. In 1944, Brazilian landscaper Burle Marx improved the forest, and it became a park in 1961. The famous Christ Redeemer statue is here, but there are many lesser known landmarks such as the mysterious Gavea Rock, and Emperor's Table, a spot where the green-thumbed Dom Pedro II liked to have his lunch. Covering 13 square miles of mountainous terrain filled with vegetation and wildlife, it is the largest urban park in Brazil, but you can easily forget that you are inside the city.

The wooded hilltops and trails are just minutes from the center of Rio and are recommended for their incredible views.

A waterfall in Tijuca Forest

Unfortunately, in recent years there has been an increase in crime at Tijuca Forest, and tourists have been robbed. While the police maintain a constant presence, the park is huge and has remote areas that are difficult to access, so it is strongly advised that you use a guide who knows where and when to go. There is nothing to buy in the park so don't bring cash or valuables. The guides are also recommended because some of the trails have steep drops.

On the weekends, many Cariocas like to hike the trails or along the paved roads, stopping to cool off in small natural waterfalls. There are a lot of different kinds of trails, from easy to challenging. Wear comfortable clothing and shoes, sunblock and insect repellent. There are also some of the best rock climbing options in all of Latin America. Iif you get in touch with Kika Bradford (see Hikes & Trails) she can take you there. A Jeep tour (see Adventures) is another great way to see the park.

You might also consider the following guides:

RioTur, the local tour board, offers free guides, if you reserve in advance (☎ 21-2297-7117), but you may have to arrange your own transportation. Paid guides are probably a better bet, and there are several to choose from: **Grupo Ar Livre** (☎ 21-2208-3029), **Grupo Catuíco** (☎ 21-2577-9007), **Agencia Espaço Vida** (☎ 21-2578-7032) and **Rio Adventures** (☎ 21-2705-5747 or 21-9719-3748).

Adventures

Adventures on Wheels

Jeep Tours

★★★Jeep tours are a Rio tradition for visiting the Tijuca Forest with a short optional hike or a ride up into the Rocinha favela to see Latin America's largest shantytown. The half-day trips cost under $50, with mineral water provided. Children over eight are welcome with an adult. The outfitters will pick you up at your hotel. **Indiana Jungle Tours**, run by friendly and conscientious Antonio Napoles, is recommended for safety, comfort and the best all around service (☎ 21-2484-2279 or 21-9298-3071). If you ask at your hotel, you can get other suggestions.

The "Bondinho" of Santa Teresa

★The Santa Teresa Streetcar (Bonde de Santa Teresa) runs from the Centro to Santa Teresa, passing over the Arches of Lapa. The ride each way costs about 25 cents. There are two lines – take the Morro de Dois Irmãos line, which goes up and down the steep hills through the entire district. Cars leave ever 15 minutes (not counting delays), from 6 am to 11 pm. On Saturday at 10 am there is a special tour to the Santa Teresa neighborhood, stopping at the Trolley Museum on Rua Carlos Brant, 14 (not worth a separate trip), on through the forest, then back to Largo de Carioca. To get to the station, take the Carioca subway stop downtown, then walk behind the black boxy Petrobras building on Avenida República do Chile, to Rua Professor Lelio Gama, no number (☎ 21-2242-2354 or 21-2524-2508).

Cycling

There is a scenic bike path all along the beaches of the Southern Zone. Starting at the beach in Leblon, it passes Ipanema, Arpoador and Copacabana. Arpoador is between Copacabana and Ipanema. Take Rua Francisco Otaviano. At Copacabana you can continue into Leme (the far side of Copacabana). The path continues through the Botafogo Harbor and Flamengo Park with some great views all the way to the Museum of Modern Art, but this section is not recommended because of occasional robberies.

If the beach is crowded you can also cycle the Lagoon, which has a roughly circular 5.7-mile/9½-km bike path that is also very scenic.

Special Bike has rentals for about $5 per hour (there is a refundable deposit) with a map of the bike routes. They are in Copacabana at Rua Barata Ribeiro, 458D (☎ 21-2547-9551). Another option is **André** – he and his family have been renting and fixing bikes in the little park at the far end of the boardwalk in Leblon for years. You can rent a bike from him for about $3 per hour if you plan to stay in the neighborhood.

Adventures on Horseback

Haras Pegasus in the rural area of Vargem Grande has guided rides of about an hour and a half. Beginners are welcome, while experts can train in classical riding and obstacle jumping. On weekends and holidays, there is a fun buggy ride for the kids. Rides cost about $20 per person, and the buggy ride costs three dollars. It is at the Estrada dos Bandeirantes 24845, open daily from 8 am to 6 pm. Because this is a remote destination, a taxi can be expensive – you can reduce the cost by taking a bus to the shopping centers in Barra de

Tijuca, and from there take a taxi. (☎ 21-2428-1687 and 21-2428-1228).

The **Jockey Club** in the Southern Zone has horse races for spectators Mondays from 6:15-11 pm, Fridays 4-10 pm, with Grand Prix and Classics on the weekends from 2 to 8 pm. It's in the Gavea neighborhood, at Praça Santos Dumont, 31. Call for more information (☎ 21-2512-9988).

Adventures on Water

Beaches

Copacabana Beach

Rio's beaches are part of the city's charm. The water is cleaner than it has been in years, but is still polluted – even though nobody seems to mind.

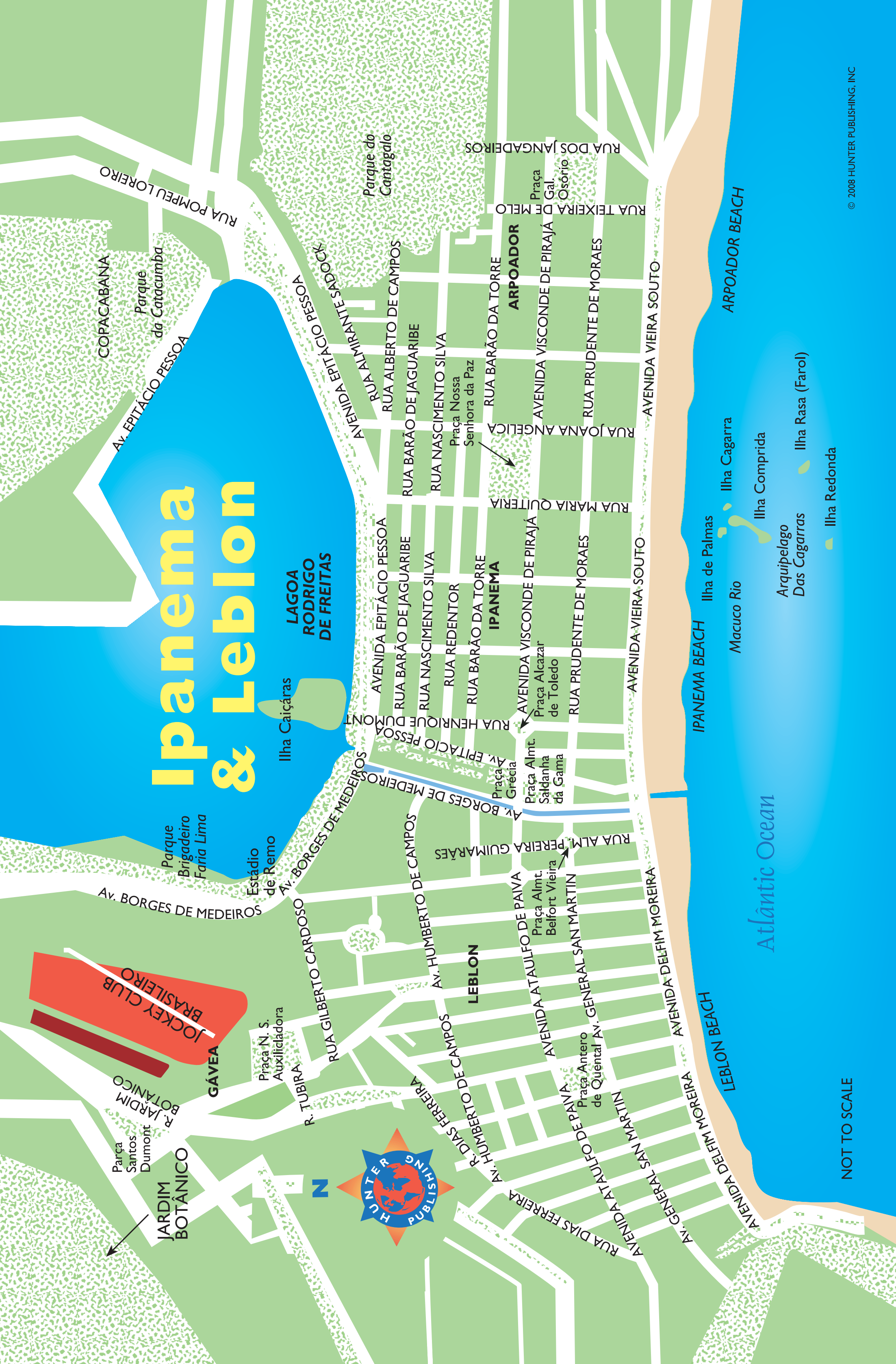
Virtually every day during the summer and especially on the weekends the beaches fill up with buffed and toned sun-worshipers. Wandering merchants and kiosks along the boardwalk sell refreshments. Don't bring much cash and be careful with your belongings. Locals usually bring just sandles and maybe a beach bag for suntan lotion, or *a can*ga beach wrap, which you can buy on the beach.

There are safe and clean restrooms in the big cement "postos" lining the boardwalk at numbered intervals, but you have to pay a nominal fee to use them.

There is a lot of activity with games like fresco-ball (swatting a rubber ball back and forth with wooden paddles), beach volleyball, and, when it's not so crowded, pick-up games of soccer. If you are really serious about the game, you might ask to join in but don't be surprised if locals dance circles around you in their sandy national sport.

★★**Ipanema** gets very crowded with the rich and beautiful. The word means "bad waters" in Tupi, and the surf can be dangerous. In the evening people come to hang out and watch the sunset.

Overlooking Ipanema Beach


Ipanema & Leblon
LAGOA RODRIGO DE FREITAS
Ilha Caiçáras
COPACABANA
Parque da Catacumba
Parque do Cantagalo
RUA POMPEU LOREIRO
Av. EPITÁCIO PESSOA
AVENIDA EPITÁCIO SADOCK
RUA ALMIRANTE SADOCK
AVENIDA EPITÁCIO PESSOA
RUA ALBERTO DE CAMPOS
RUA BARÃO DE JAGUARIBE
RUA NASCIMENTO SILVA
Praça Nossa Senhora da Paz
RUA BARÃO DA TORRE
ARPOADOR
AVENIDA VISCONDE DE PIRAJÁ
RUA PRUDENTE DE MORAES
AVENIDA VIEIRA SOUTO
RUA DOS JANGADEIROS
RUA TEIXEIRA DE MELO
Praça Gal. Osório
RUA JOANA ANGELICA
RUA MARIA QUITERIA
RUA REDENTOR
IPANEMA
Praça Alcazar de Toledo
RUA HENRIQUE DUMONT
AV. EPITÁCIO PESSOA
Praça Grécia
Praça Almt. Saldanha da Gama
AV. BORGES DE MEDEIROS
RUA BORGES DE MEDEIROS
RUA ALM. PEREIRA GUIMARÃES
Praça Almt. Belfort Vieira
Parque Brigadeiro Faria Lima
Estádio de Remo
Av. BORGES DE MEDEIROS
Av. BORGES DE MEDEIROS
RUA GILBERTO CARDOSO
Av. HUMBERTO DE CAMPOS
LEBLON
AVENIDA ATAULFO DE PAIVA
Av. GENERAL SAN MARTIN
AVENIDA DELFIM MOREIRA
Praça Antero de Quental
JOCKEY CLUB BRASILEIRO
GÁVEA
Praça N. S. Auxilidadora
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AV. GENERAL SAN MARTIN
AVENIDA DELFIM MOREIRA
LEBLON BEACH
IPANEMA BEACH
ARPOADOR BEACH
Atlântic Ocean
Macuco Rio
Ilha de Palmas
Ilha Cagarra
Ilha Comprida
Arquipelago Das Cagarras
Ilha Rasa (Farol)
Ilha Redonda
NOT TO SCALE

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Near Post 9 is a "gay" section.

★★**Leblon** is a trendy surfing beach with dunes between Leblon and Ipanema (separated by a canal) where favela kids do acrobatic back flips.

★**Arpoador** is between Ipanema and Copacabana. The beach is small and there is an outcropping of rocks you can explore. This is a surfing beach, and if you like snorkeling you can check out the water along the rocks, as the water is calmer.

Copacabana and Leme together form the biggest and most crowded beach in the city, with people nearly always working out or sunbathing. On either end of the beach there are fortresses. The kiosks are OK, but the majority of restaurants facing the beach are tourist traps. Be alert, as Copacabana has more thefts than the other beaches.

The beaches of the Western Zone are hard to reach if you are staying in the Southern Zone, but they are the nicest and cleanest in the city. There is some high surf farther west (see *Surfing*). Along the boardwalk there are various bars, kiosks, and restaurants. To get there from the Southern Zone you will need to take a bus or a taxi – ask your concierge to explain the best route from your hotel.

Scuba Diving

Diving in Rio is so-so but at least the weather and topside views are good. Typically, the sea floor is barren, with occasional rock formations and sandy areas, and minor sea life such as urchins, starfish, princess parrotfish, sergeant majors, doctorfish and occasionally grouper. Because of boat traffic, be careful surfacing. There is an introductory wreck dive.

Water temperature ranges from 68-71.6°F (20-22°C) most of the year with visibility rarely over 50 feet (best in the Brazilian summer). Currents can be strong at some dive points, but most are basic dives. Prices are about $40-45 for a two-tank dive to Ilhas Cagarras, Rasa or Redonda and about $50 to the points farther out. Night dives are available. Full equipment rental costs about $20. Boats depart from Glória Marina near Flamengo Park. Contact your divemaster for details on departure times and conditions.

Dive operators in Rio tend to be well equipped with high quality boats and equipment.

Here are your choices: **Cima Fundo Do Mar**, certified by PADI and PDIC, is at Rua Sao Clemente, 265, Shop 204 in Botafogo (☎ 21-2286-0822 or 21-9177-3535); **Diversquest** is a 5-star PADI dive center with departures Thursdays, weekends and holidays, or by special arrangement (☎ 21-2539-1268); **Paulinho Dive** is PDIC- and NAUI-certified and will take experienced divers to **Filhote Grotto**, a semi-submerged cavern you can enter on a calm day (☎ 21-9973-7759); **Aquamar** is PDIC-certified and located at Rua de Alfândega, 112 in the Centro, with departures from Glória Marina, and periodic trips to other destinations (☎ 22-2507-0748 or 21-2222-4560).

Boat Excursions

For a really quick joy ride and a land tour, visit ★**Fiscal Island** (Ilha Fiscal), which has a tiny Neo-Gothic palace built by Emperor Pedro I. This was the site of the Empire's last royal ball before the proclamation of the Republic in 1889. To get there board a boat at the Navy Cultural Center (see *Museums*), at Avenida Alfredo Agache (no number), at the end of Praça 15 de Novembro. Departures are Thursday through Sunday at 1, 2:30, and 4 pm, but they are closed on holidays (☎ 21-3870-6992 or 21-2233-9165).

The Navy has a cheap bay tour (around $3) on the historic tugboat, ★***Laurindo Pitta***, which served in WWI. The 1½-hour cruise lets you see the coastline as well as the Navy's warships up-close. The tug departs from the **Navy Cultural Center in the Centro** (see *Museums*), Thursday through Sunday at 1:15 and 3:15 pm. It is closed on national holidays (☎ 21-2233-9165 or 21-3870-6992).

The tall ship Tocorime

★★***Tocorime* Veleiro Oceanico** is Brazil's only tall ship that you can take for a charter cruise along the coast, but make advance arrangements. See their site at www.tocorime.net. The offices are at the Gloria Marina downtown, on Avenida Infante Dom Henrique (no number), shop number B3 (☎ 21-3826-6092, 21-3826-6675, or 21-9144-2556).

For a full-day cruise with swimming and refreshments, contact Vitor Goldstein at **Tropical Cruises** (☎ 21-2487-1687 or 9963-6172) or Kdu Magalhães at **Fishing in Rio** (☎ 21-2539-1424 or 21-9978-3444). Prices vary. Tropical cruises also offers three-day or longer charters to the Sun Coast and the Green Coast.

Sport Fishing

If you want to just drop a line in the bay, boats go out almost every morning, even in bad weather, and you can fish for snook, drum, weakfish, cutlass fish and queen fish. Off the coast you can troll for anchovies, yellowtail and bluefish when weather permits, and farther out there is coastal bottom fishing for sea brean, black grouper, big eyes, weakfish and croaker, as well as trolling and casting for bluefish, bonito, jacks, and bluerunner. There are deep-sea trips 50 miles off the coast year-round, with bottom fishing for groupers, sand perches, sea brean, and congers – on a good day you can raise dozens of fish. You will need to book in advance. All equipment is provided. Bill fishing is available 20 miles off the coast, with sailfish, blue marlins, white marlins and other game fish from October to February.

Fishing in Rio has catch-and-release sport fishing trips at $100 per hour, with a minimum of four hours for the bay, six hours for the coastal islands, for up to six people (credit cards not accepted). See www.fishing-in-rio.com for details (☎ 21-2539-1424 or 21-9978-3444).

Tropical Cruises has bay and coastal trips, with deep-water fishing year-round for up to eight people. Trips take about eight hours, normally leaving at 7 am. Bait and tackle is included, and open bar, snacks and ground transfers are optional. For prices, contact Vitor Goldstein (☎ 21-2487-1687 or 21-9963-6172) or see the www.tropicalcruises.com.br.

Kitesurfing

There is a small group of kitesurfers who hang out in Barra de Tijuca at the beach called **Pepê** (right around Posto 2, a big cement structure on the beach), with several outfitters and schools. For English-language lessons in the sport contact Alex at **Halikite Escola de Kitesurf** (☎ 21-9889-4405 or 21-2538-1834).

Rafting

Rio Adventures has rafting trips to Três Rios about 105 miles/175 km away, with transport provided. The best time to go is from November and May. The white-water river ride takes three hours; breakfast and lunch is included (☎ 21-2705-5747 or 21-9719-3748).

Tuareg Rafting & Expedições e Adventura runs weekend rafting trips to Riberao das Lajes, with a full-day or half-day option. During the rest of the day you can relax in the base camp. Trips cost under $50 including breakfast and lunch (☎ 21-2238-0230, 21-2570-4413 or 21-9275-9040).

Sea Kayaking

From September to May, **Kayak in Rio** has four-hour guided trips to Cotunduba Island. Equipment and photos are included, with different routes and lessons available, but bring shoes or flip-flops for the island. Beginners over 10 years old are welcome in groups of three to eight, but good swimming skills are required. ☎ 21-2541-6437 or 21-9954-9632.

Surfing

Surfing and bodyboarding are very popular, and there is often crowding. Leblon and Ipanema both have decent curls, as does Arpoador. **Paulo Dolabella Surf School** on Ipanema beach (Avenida Viera Souto) rents boards in front of Rua Maria Quiteria (☎ 21-2259-2320). If you want to buy a board or meet local surfers there is a row of surf shops at **Galeria River** with good deals on decent boards in Arpoador, on Rua Franciso Otaviano 67.

And if you go out past Barra de Tijuca (the trip is a bit out of the way from the Southern Zone), there is **Recreio Beach** at Sernambetiba point. On the other side is **Macumba-Pontal**, which has over a mile of beach with up to nine-foot waves. After that is **Prainha**, about a quarter-mile with up to nine-foot waves. Finally there is **Grumari**, with over a mile of beach and huge waves during storms. For board rentals contact **Barra de Tijuca Surf School** on Praia de Barra, on Avenida Sernambetiba at the first kiosk after Posto 5 in the direction of Recreio Beach (☎ 21-3209-0302) or **Rico Oi School** on the beach near Posto 4 in Barra de Tijuca, in front of the Hotel Sheraton Barra (☎ 21-3328-3016).

The **Rio de Janeiro Surf Federation** is at Rua Visconde de Inhauma, 39/701 in the Centro, and you might try getting tips on conditions there, but don't expect much English (☎ 21-2223-0614 or 21-2203-2547).

Adventures in the Air

★★Hang Gliding & Paragliding

Tandem flights provide an amazing view of the forest, sea and city. Flights take 15 minutes, while the whole tour including transportation takes from one to three hours. The flight costs about $80. The following certified instructors all speak English. **Hang Gliding Tour**. Assad Junior has over 24 years of experience and was one of the first to offer hang gliding tours in Rio (☎ 21-7816-2558, 21-2422-6531, 21-9343-3380 or 21-9814-6308). **Just Fly** has tandem hang gliding and Paulo Celini there has over 15 years of experience (☎ 21-9985-7540, 21-9798-1807, or 21-2268-0565). Chico Santos of **Go Up** offers tandem hang gliding with over 18 years experience (☎ 21-3322-3165 or 21-9177-9234). **Rio Adventures** offers tandem hang gliding (☎ 21-2705-5747or 21-9719-3748). **Superfly** does hang gliding and paragliding. Instructor Ruy Marra has 23 years of experience and is twice national champion (☎ 21-3322-2296, 21-9887-6084, or 21-8123-3169). Haroldo Castro Neves of **Tandem Flight** has over 23 years experience (☎ 21-9873-9575).

Helicopter Tours

Though expensive, seeing the city from a helicopter is memorable. **Cruzeiro Taxi Aereo** does short panoramic flights and transport to other cities from the **Jacarepagua Airport** in Barra de Tijuca, on Avenida Ayrton Senna, 2541/Hanger 11 (☎ 21-3325-6500).

Helisight/Helisul offers panoramic flights of the **Sugar Loaf** and other landmarks from helipads located conveniently around the city. Office hours are from 9 am to 8 pm daily on Rua Conde Bernadotte, 26/119 in Leblon (☎ 21-2511-2141 or 21-2259-6995).

Skydiving

A twin-engine plane takes you up, then out you go for 45 seconds of free fall before the instructor activates the parachute. The trip takes from two to four hours. No experience is required, all equipment and transportation are supplied (adults only). **Rio Adventures** has tandem jumps, costing $245, with filming and photography extra. Certified jumpers can go up solo for $95 plus $20 for the parachute rental. Credit cards not accepted. Located Downtown at Avenida Ernani do Amaral Peixoto 450/1007. www.rioadventures.com, ☎ 21-2705-5747or 21-9719-3748. Another option is **Barra Jumping** on Avenida Ayrton Senna, 2541 in the Western Zone. www.barrajumping.com, ☎ 21-3326-2304.

Adventures in the Trees

Scrambling over obstacles in the trees on steel cables hooked to a safety line with helmet and gloves is one way to explore the rainforest. Anyone in basically good shape from eight years old can enjoy them. The circuit takes about an hour, with transportation and equipment is provided. Get in touch with **Indiana Jungle Tours**, run by Antonio Napoles. (☎ 21-2484-2279 or 21-9298-3071) or **Rio Adventures** (☎ 21-2705-5747 or 21-9719-3748).

Adventures on the Land

Caving

In the Tijuca National Park, there are three caves, including one of the largest gneiss caves in Brazil. It takes about two hours, not counting transport time with a bit of hiking – wear comfortable clothes. It costs $25 per person. Contact **Rio Adventures** (☎ 21-2705-5747or 21-9719-3748).

Golf

★**Gávea Golf and Country Club** is Rio's most exclusive golf course, on Estrada da Gávea 800, in **São Conrado** in the Southern Zone. It's a four-star, 18-hole championship course. Foreign tourists can get on without difficulty if they make arrangements 48 hours in advance. The green fee is $110 plus mandatory bag and caddy for $30. Open Monday and Wednesday at 9 am, Tuesday and Thursday at 12:30 and Friday at 11 am. Access is by taxi. Get more info by e-mailing gaveagol@unisys.com.br (☎ 21-3322-4141).

Golden Green Golf Club on Avenida Marapendi 2901 in Barra da Tijuca in the Western Zone has a less impresive six-hole course with water obstacles, islands and palm tree stands. The course is well lit so you can tee off in the afternoon when it's cooler. The green fee is about $20, with $10 to rent a bag and cart. Access is by taxi (☎ 21-2434-0429).

★Hiking & Rock Climbing

Rio has a unique mix of mountains and ocean, and the trails minutes away let you see both. Most trails can be enjoyed by anyone in average physical condition. Some are steep or require bouldering moves, and two-day expert climbs are also possible. For rock climbers, there are some of the most challenging routes in Latin America. Generally, you will have a choice between half-day or full-day hikes.

One climbing guide who really knows the area and the sport is **Kika Bradford**, especially recommended for foreigners with courses, hikes, and climbs for adults, children and adolescents. She speaks English and American sign language (☎ 21-2422-0692 or 9221-8741). Check out her site at www.aribira.com.br.

There are also guides at the **Brazilian Expeditionary Center** (CEB). (www.ceb.org.br, ☎ 21-2252-9844 or 21-2262-6360).

WERE PHOENICIANS THE FIRST TO VISIT BRAZIL?

There is a theory that ancient Phoenicians (now Syria and Lebanon) crossed the Atlantic in cedar triremes and landed in Brazil thousands of years before Europeans. Part of the evidence for this notion is the mysterious **Gavea Rock**, which clearly resembles a human face – or that of a sphinx, say researchers. The theory began in the 19th century, when Emperor Dom Pedro I took an interest in reports his father Dom João VI, the King of Portugal, had received from missionaries who found strange markings at the site. Officials looked into the matter, reportedly confirming some unusual markings but concluded the "face" was a natural phenomenon. The topic was buried until the 1930s when an expedition began some excavations and supposedly found Phonecian script that was translated to read: “Here Badezir, King of Tyre, Jetbaal’s oldest son.” There are also supposedly Phoenecian markings on the **Sugar Loaf**, which some believe was the “tail” of an immense geographical sphinx marking the location of the king’s tomb. The evidence doesn’t end there – linguists have reportedly found similarities between Brazilian indigenous languages and that of the ancient Phoenicians. To add to the debate, strange inscriptions in such far-flung places as the Amazon rainforest, the curious stone ruins of **Igatu** in Bahia state (see *Chapada Diamantina*), as yet undeciphered Ingá inscriptions in Paraiba state, the *marajoara* pottery techniques of Pará state, and similarities between Brazilian natural “ports” in the North and Northeast and those of Phoenecian architecture – all have been proposed as support for the theory that Brazil was visted by Old World peoples before the arrival of the Portuguese. Photographs of some of these inscriptions are archived at the **National Museum** while tomb markers found with unusual script can be seen at the **National History Museum**. There are other signs in the Vatican archives and in London, and European researchers over the years have attempted to pin down hard evidence that would confirm the theory, as yet only a legend.

What to Buy

Rio is great for buying clothes, but prices can be pretty salty – the best bargains are leather (belts, shoes, bags), beach towels, called *cangas*, precious stones and jewelry, local perfumes, women’s fashions, such as the famous and tiny bikinis, and Brazilian music. The street fairs are filled with merchants hawking handicrafts, artwork and souvenirs from all over South America, catering primarily to tourists.

Shopping Centers

Shopping centers are not cheap but they have the best selection.

The upscale ★Rio Sul Shopping Center is the best for clothes in Botafogo, on Rua Lauro Muller, 116. It’s open Monday through Saturday 10 am to 10 pm, and Sunday from 3 to 9 pm (☎ 21-2545-7200). ★**Botafogo Praia Shopping** is good for high-quality household goods and sundry Brazilian objects like capirinha kits. On Praia de Botafogo, 400, it’s open Monday through Saturday 10 am to 10 pm (☎ 21-2559-9880). **São Conrado Fashion Mall** is expensive, with top brands (many imported), in the São Conrado neighborhood, at Estrada da Gavea, 899 close to the Leblon. Open Monday through Friday 11 am to 10 pm, and Sunday from 3 to 9 pm (☎ 21-3083-0000).

Though distant, the ★★**Barrashopping** shopping center in the western zone is the largest shopping mall in Latin America, with a special information desk (at Location K) to help foreign tourists. A shopping bus service leaves from Leme in the Southern Zone! It is in Barra de Tijuca, on Avenida das Americas 4666, and opens Monday through Saturday 11 am to 9:30 pm, and Sunday from 3 to 9 pm (☎ 21-3089-1000, 21-3089-1100).

Street Fairs

Largo de Carioca downtown used to be dangerous but is safer these days. Outside the Carioca subway stop, here you can find cheap knick-knacks from 8 am to around 6 pm. Just north is **Rua de Carioca**, one of the best-known commercial streets, with music stores, cutlery shops, Chinese import shops, wine and cheese shops, and other retailers. Here you can buy a samurai sword or guitar strings and anything in between. The street turns seedier at night, though to about 7 pm on weeknights it is OK.

Right in Ipanema on **Visconde de Piraja** there are dozens of boutiques, perfume stores, bookstores, jewelry shops, bikini shops, surf shops, and other upscale retailers. The nearby **Ipanema Hippie Fair** on Sunday from 9 am to 6 pm has lousy paintings, colorful hammocks and carpets, leather goods, purses, furniture, sandals, costume jewelry, and other curiosities on Praça General Osório.

The ★**Babylon Hype Fair** (Babilonia Feira Hype) is a street fair with tents selling fashion goods for alternative tastes. Entrance is $3 and it opens from 2 to 10 pm. Located in Gávea at Praça Santos Dumont (☎ 21-2512-9988). The free **Gavea Antiques Fair** is held there too on the square facing the Jockey Club on Sundays, but it is weak.

Babylon Hype Fair

The ★**Copacabana Street Fair**, after 6 pm on weekends, has oil paintings, sculptures, leather goods and T-shirts, costume jewelry, beach *cangas*, and many other things. On Avenida Atlantica, 3264 (in front of the Othon Palace Hotel).

Don't miss the ★★★**Northeastern Fair** (Feira Nordestina) at the São Cristóvão Pavilion in the northern zone. You can get good deals on hammocks, blankets, leather goods, sand art in bottles and other items from the Northeast Region. There is also *forró*-style dancing, *repentistas* improvising funny verses for hours on end, and *capoeira*, the Afro-Brazilian fighting dance. Restaurants serve great traditional food. If you can't visit the Northeast, this is the next best thing. Entrance is free. Open Saturday from 3 pm non-stop till Sunday at 4 pm. Access is by taxi. Note the fair is safe but the neighborhood is not – don't go wandering outside.

Arts & Crafts Shops

★**The Indian Museum** sells indigenous crafts from wood, straw, feathers and stone in the Botafogo neighborhood, on Rua das Palmeiras, 55. Open Monday through Friday 9:30 am to 5:30 pm, weekends from 1 to 5 pm (☎ 21-2286-8899).

Brazil Feito à Mão has an interesting selection of ecological and ethnic goods from around Brazil at a shopping center on Avenida das Américas, 700 shop 110G in Barra, in the Western Zone (☎ 21-2138-8160).

After you visit the Corcovado in Cosme Velho (Laranjeiras), stop by **Jeito Brasileiro**, which sells things from all over Brazil, on Rua Ererê, 11 A. Open Monday through Friday 9 am to 6 pm, Saturday 9 am to 4 pm and Sunday 9 am to 1 pm (☎ 21-2205-7636).

O Sol is run by a not-for-profit agency that helps poor communities in Jardim Botanico, and is on Rua Corcovado, 213. It's open Monday through Friday 9 am to 6 pm and Saturday 9 am to 1 pm (☎ 21-2294-5099 or 21-2294-5149).

Fine Jewelry & Precious Stones

Brazil's high-quality jewelers give special service to tourists. These are very high-end shops but you can get a great deal. They will even deliver your purchase to your hotel.

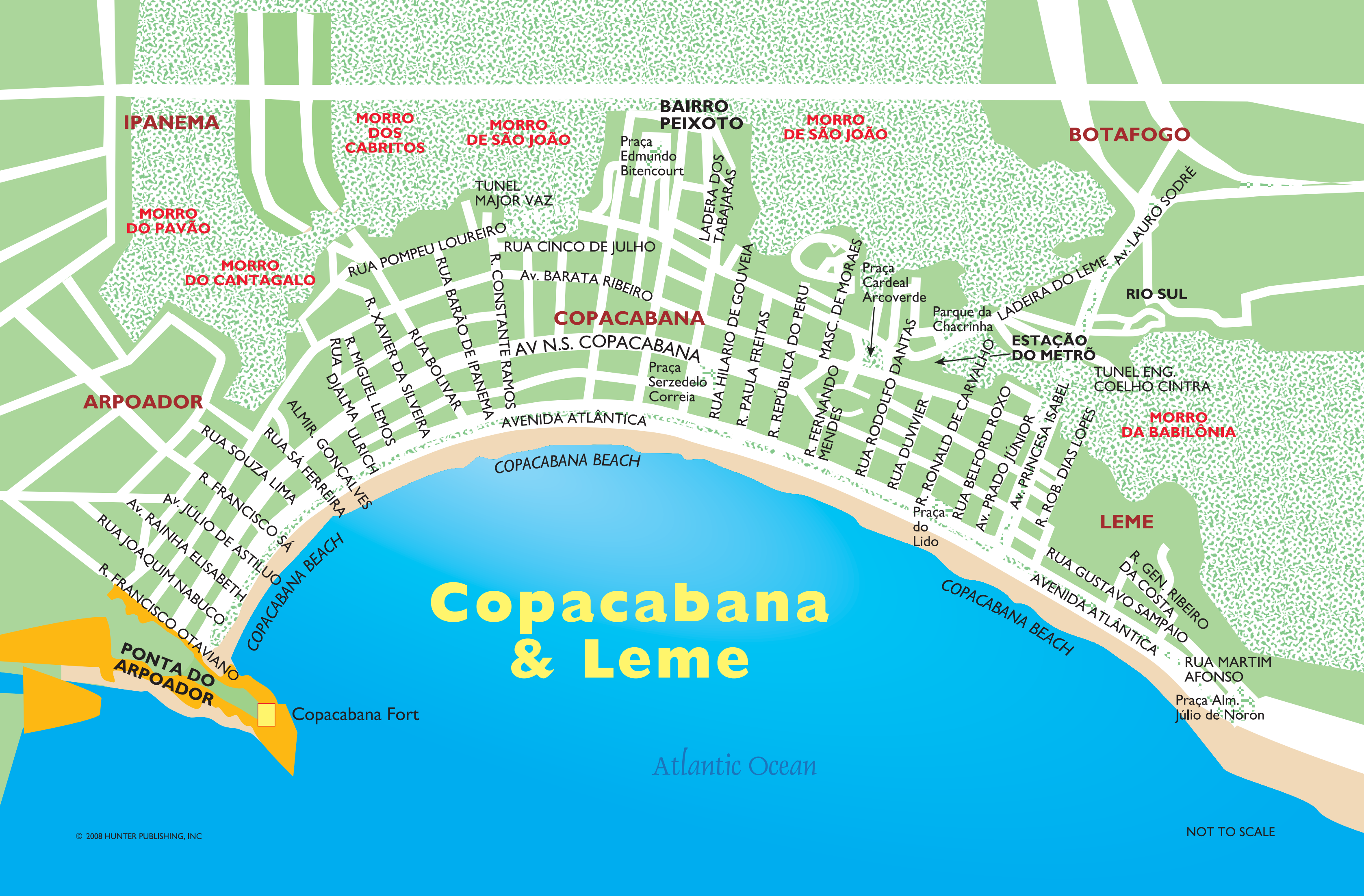
★**Amsterdam Sauer Museum of Precious Stones** will pick you up and drop you off at your hotel. It is in Ipanema on Rua Garcia D´Ávila, 105, and open Monday through Friday 10 am-6 pm and Saturday 10 am to 3 pm (☎ 21-2512-1132).

World famous ★**H Stern** will also pick you up at your hotel. Their main shop is in Ipanema, open Monday through Friday 8:30 am-6:30 pm and Saturday 8:30 am-2 pm (☎ 21-2259-7442).

★**Antonio Bernardo** will pick you up from the hotel and give you a free visit to the orchid house at the Botanical Gardens. Open weekdays 10 am-8 pm and Saturday 10 am-2 pm. It's at Garcia D'Ávila, 121, in Ipanema. Call for reservations (☎ 21-2523-3192).

Where To Stay

Rio's occupancy can be close to 100% during major holidays. The Riotur booth at the International Airport and the Novo Rio Bus Station can help you book a room but advance reservations are advised. Breakfast is usually included and most rooms have a minibar. There are a lot of hotels on the beach but if you want a room facing the ocean, you should request it. Some that are one block from the beach are just as nice, and cheaper. On top of room rates, there are service charges of 10%, tax of 5%, and a "tourist tax" surchage of a few dollars. You can probably get a 30% discount in off-season or through a


Copacabana & Leme
IPANEMA
MORRO DOS CABRITOS
MORRO DE SÃO JOÃO
BAIRRO PEIXOTO
MORRO DE SÃO JOÃO
BOTAFOGO
Praça Edmundo Bitencourt
TUNEL MAJOR VAZ
LADERA DOS TABAJARAS
MORRO DO PAVÃO
MORRO DO CANTAGALO
RUA POMPEU LOUREIRO
RUA CINCO DE JULHO
Av. LAURO SODRÉ
Av. BARATA RIBEIRO
RIO SUL
LADEIRA DO LEME
Praça Cardeal Arcoverde
Parque da Chacrinha
COPACABANA
ESTAÇÃO DO METRÕ
AV N.S. COPACABANA
TUNEL ENG. COELHO CINTRA
Praça Serzedelo Correia
ARPOADOR
MORRO DA BABILÔNIA
AVENIDA ATLÂNTICA
R. XAVIER DA SILVEIRA
RUA BOLIVAR
RUA BARÃO DE IPANEMA
R. CONSTANTE RAMOS
RUA HILARIO DE GOUVEIA
R. PAULA FREITAS
R. REPÚBLICA DO PERU
MASC. DE MORAES
R. FERNANDO MENDES
RUA RODOLFO DANTAS
RUA DUVIVIER
R. RONALD DE CARVALHO
RUA BELFORD ROXO
Av. PRADO JÚNIOR
Av. PRINCESA ISABEL
R. ROB. DIAS LOPES
RUA DJALMA ULRICH
R. MIGUEL LEMOS
ALMIR. GONÇALVES
RUA SÁ FERREIRA
RUA SOUZA LIMA
R. FRANCISCO SÁ
Av. JÚLIO DE ASTILUO
Av. RAINHA ELISABETH
RUA JOAQUIM NABUCO
R. FRANCISCO OTAVIANO
COPACABANA BEACH
COPACABANA BEACH
COPACABANA BEACH
Praça do Lido
LEME
RUA GUSTAVO SAMPAIO
R. GEN. RIBEIRO DA COSTA
AVENIDA ATLÂNTICA
RUA MARTIM AFONSO
Praça Alm. Júlio de Noron
PONTA DO ARPOADOR
Copacabana Fort
Atlantic Ocean
NOT TO SCALE

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travel agent. Low-end places are not recommended because of bugs, noise or other unpleasantries. The cheaper hotels listed are simple but decent.

Copacabana

Copacabana Palace

★★★**Copacabana Palace** ($$$$$), Avenida Atlantica, 1702, faces the beach and is a historic landmark. This is where heads of state and the Rolling Stones stay. Unbeatable. (www.copacabanapalace.orient-express.com, ☎ 21-2548-7070)

★**JW Marriott** ($$$$$), Avenida Atlantica, 2600, faces the beach with luxury accommodations. Breakfast not included. (www.marriotthotels.com/riomc, ☎ 21-2545-6500).

★**Sofitel Rio Palace** ($$$$), Avenida Atlantica, 4240, faces the beach with luxury accommodations Breakfast not included. (www.accorhotels.com.br, ☎ 21-2525-1232).

★**Le Meridien** ($$$), Avenida Atlantica, 1020, offers very comfortable accommodations facing the beach. (www.lemeridien-copacabana.com, ☎ 21-2546-0866, 21-3873-8888, or 21-3873-8777).

Rio Atlântica Pestana ($$$), Avenida Atlantica, 2964, faces the beach with very comfortable accommodations. Breakfast not included. (www.pestanahotels.com.br, ☎ 21-2548-6332).

Luxor Copacabana Hotel ($$$), Avenida Atlantica, 2554 facing the beach, offers comfortable accommodations. Service charge and tax included. (www.luxor-hotels.com, ☎ 21-2545-1070).

Luxor Continental Hotel ($$), Rua Gustavo Sampaio, 320 in Leme, has comfortable rooms. Service charge included. (www.luxor-hotels.com, ☎ 21-2546-1070 or 21-2541-1946).

Ipanema

★★**Caesar Park** ($$$$$), Avenida Vieira Souto, 460, faces the beach with luxury accommodations. Service charge and tax included. Breakfast not included. (www.caesarpark-rio.com, ☎ 21-2525-2525).

Ipanema Plaza Hotel ($$$) at Rua Farme de Amoedo, 34 has comfortable rooms. Service charge included. (www.ipanemaplaza.com.br, ☎ 21-3687-2000).

Everest Rio Hotel ($$$), Rua Prudente de Moraes, 1117, has very comfortable accommodations. Service charge included. (www.everest.com.br, ☎ 21-2523-2282).

Ipanema Plaza

Best Western Hotel Sol Ipanema ($$), Avenida Viera Souto, 320, faces the beach and has comfortable accommodations. (www.solipanema.com.br, ☎ 21-2525-2020).

Hotel Praia Ipanema ($$), Avenida Vieira Souto, 706, faces Ipanema beach with comfortable accommodations. Service charge included. (www.praiaipanema.com, ☎ 21-2540-4949).

Vermont ($$), Rua Visconde de Pirajá 254 (☎ 21-2522-0057), offers standard accommodations. Service charge and tax included.

Leblon

★**Hotel Marina All Suites** ($$$$$), Avenida Delfim Moreira, 696, faces the beach and has luxury accommodations. Service charge included. Breakfast not included. (www.hotelmarina.com.br, ☎ 21-2540-4990).

Marina Palace Hotel ($$$), Avenida Delfim Moreira, 630, faces the beach with comfortable rooms. Service charge included. Breakfast not included. (www.hotelmarina.com.br, ☎ 21-2540-5212).

Leblon Palace Hotel ($$), Avenida Ataulfo de Paiva, 204, has standard accommodations a short walk from Ipanema and Leblon beaches. Service charge included. (www.leblonpalace.com.br, ☎ 21-2512-8000).

Botafogo

Note that Botafogo is not within walking distance of anything but a few historic sites – you will need to take a cab. But accommodations here are cheaper.

Flórida Hotel ($$), Rua Ferreira Viana, 69 in Flamengo (☎ 21-2195-6800), has comfortable rooms. Service charge and tax included. (www.windsorhoteis.com).

Imperial Hotel ($), Rua de Catete, 186 in Catete 132, offers clean, budget accommodations in a building more than 100 years old, with air-conditioning, sauna and pool. It's a rare find for the price. (☎ 21-2556-5212).

Pool at the Florida Hotel

Glória

★**Hotel Gloria** ($$$), Rua do Russel, 632, is a splendid old hotel on a hill from the 1920s used by heads of state, with luxury accommodations. Though the neighborhood has faded, the hotel has not. You will need to take a cab to get around. Service charge included. (www.hotelgloriario.com.br, ☎ 21-2555-7272).

Bed and Breakfasts (Hostels)

Rio is the only city in Brazil with decent hostel accommodations.

Rio Hostel

Rio Hostel ($), Rua Joaquim Murtinho 361 in Santa Teresa, has hammocks, air-conditioning, individual bathrooms TV and a pool. Service charge and tax included. (www.riohostel.com, ☎ 21-3852-0827).

★**Adventure Hostel**, Rua Vinícius de Moraes 174 in Ipanema, is a friendly hostel with air-conditioning ($$) or without ($). This is the best place for young travelers on a tight budget. (www.adventurehostel.com.br, ☎ 21-3813-2726).

Cama e Café ($), Rua Progresso, 67 in Santa Teresa, has rooms in a private residence. *Apartamentos* with communal bathrooms have a fan. Suites ($) are more expensive and have air-conditioning and a private bathroom. (www.camaecafe.com.br, ☎ 21-2221-7635).

Apart-Hotels

For longer stays you might opt for these furnished apartments with maid and concierge service, but they are not worth it for short stays.

Real Residence ($$), Avenida Princesa Isabel, 500 in Copacabana, is close to the beach, and minutes from Santos Dumont Airport. Standard amenities include pool and gym. (www.redeprotel.com.br, ☎ 21-2546-6565 or 21-2546-6565).

Apart Hotel Monsieur Le Blond ($$), Avenida Bartolomeu Mitre, 455 in Leblon, is close to the beach and nightlife, with pool and sauna. (www.redeprotel.com.br, ☎ 21-2529-3030).

Where to Eat

Rio de Janeiro has great dining options. Your best choices are Mediterranean and international cuisine, or traditional Brazilian styles. Service in Rio tends to be bad and, perhaps not a coincidence, the 10% tip is mandated by law (you can add another 5% if you are happy with the service). Avoid the tourist traps along Copacabana beach.

After Hours

★**Cervantes** ($) has been famous for half a century. The flagship order is a roast pork loin and pineapple sandwich ("*saunduiche de pernil*"), with a side-order of potato salad at 4 am. The stand-up part of the restaurant draws a rogues' gallery near the red light district of Copacabana on Avenida Prado Junior, 335 (☎ 21-2275-6147).

African

★**Yorubá's** ($$) is a gem, but very simple. Credit cards not accepted. Open Wednesday through Saturday from noon to 3 and 7 pm to midnight. Closed Sunday at 8 pm. Located in Botafogo, on Rua Arnaldo Quintela, 94 (☎ 21-2295-5193).

Bahian

★★★**Yemanjá** ($$$) is the best Bahian in town. There is a replica of Salvador's Pelourinho neighborhood in the back. Open for lunch and dinner every day in Ipanema, on Avenida Visconde de Pirajá, 128 (☎ 21-2267-0894 or 21-2247-7004).

Brazilian

The **Esplanada Grill** ($$$) has upscale Brazilian cuisine and a lively atmosphere. Ipanema, Rua Barão de Torre, 600 (☎ 21-2239-6028).

File de Ouro ($$) is a noisy *botequim* and steakhouse – go for lunch after seeing the Jardim Botânico as it is within walking distance. Portions are enormous. Rua Jardim Botânico, 731 (☎ 21-2259-2396).

★The **Nova Capela** ($$) is popular with musicians who drop by for food or drinks in Lapa. This *botequim*-style eatery is unpretentious, with crabby waiters and a great *picanha*. In Lapa, Avenida Mem de Sa, 96 (☎ 21-2252-6228 or 21-2508-8493).

Esplanada Grill

Cuban

★★**Esch Café** ($$$) serves Brazilian and international fare with a Cuban-themed cigar bar. You can choose from the world's best cigars in a climate-controlled chamber. In the Centro at Rua do Rosario, 107 (☎ 21-2507-5866); and in Leblon, Rua Dias Ferreira, 78 (☎ 21-2512-5651).

Minas Gerais

Mala e Cuia ($$) serves good *comida mineira*, buffet-style in clay pots. In Copacabana at Rua Raimundo Correia, 34-C. Open daily from 11 am to 12:30 pm. Accepts credit cards. (☎ 21-2235-7994).

Buffet by Kilo

The **Pampa Grill** ($$) has good grilled meats, with a very wide selection in the buffet. Rua Almirante Barroso, 90 in the Centro. Accepts all credit cards. (☎ 21-2524-1199).

★**Fellini** ($$$), in Leblon, has a delicious and casual but upscale buffet. There are often lines out front on the weekends for lunch. Rua General Urquisa, 104. Accepts all credit cards. (☎ 21-2511-3600 or 21-2259-6230).

Italian

★★**Gero** ($$$) is one of the city's best Mediterranian-style restaurants. Accepts all credit cards. Open for lunch and dinner. In Ipanema, at Rua Anibal de Mendonça 157 (☎ 21-2239-8158).

★★**Osteria Dell'Angolo** ($$$), once a simple tavern run by Italian immigrants, became so popular that it expanded. The ambience is informal but classy. In Ipanema, at Rua Paul Redfern 40. Open daily from noon to 4 pm and 6 to midnight. Accepts all credit cards (☎ 21-2259-3148).

La Trattoria ($$) is a simple place and a landmark for 20 years. Does not accept credit cards. Opens daily for lunch and dinner. In Copacabana, on Rua Fernando Mendes, 7-A (☎ 21-2255-0781).

Feijoada

Confeitaria Colombo

On Saturday there is a *feijoada* at ★★**Confeitaria Colombo** ($$$), from noon. It's good but the real attraction is the restaurant, which is a historic landmark. In the Centro at Rua Gonçalves Dias, 32 (☎ 21-2232-2300).

The chic ★**Gattopardo** ($$$) also serves a classy Saturday *feijoada*. In the Lagoa neighborhood, at Avenida Borges de Medeiros, 1426, it's open from 12:30 am till the last customer goes home. Also serves tasty pizza at night (☎ 21-2219-3133).

On Saturday, Rio's better hotels have very good but expensive *feijoadas*. Try the **Caesar Park** ($$$) in Ipanema, on Avenida Viera Souto 460 (☎ 21-2525-2525), **Le Meridien** ($$$), in Copacabana, Avenida Atlantica, 1020 (☎ 21-2546-0866) or the **Sofitel Rio Palace** ($$$), in Copacabana, Avenida Atlantica, 4240 (☎ 21-2525-1232).

French

Olympe
restaurante

Olympe

★**Olympe** ($$$) is in Jardim Botânico, at Rua Custodio Serrao, 62, and is open Monday through Saturday for dinner. On Friday it also serves lunch (☎ 21-2539-4542).

German

★**Bar Brasil** ($$) serves German food with a Brazilian touch. Try the great draft beer (*chopp*) from bronze beer towers. In Lapa, Avenida Mem de Sa, 90. Open weekdays 11:30 am to 11 pm. Credit cards not accepted. ☎ 21-2509-5943.

★**Bar Luiz** ($$) is a jovial tiled beer hall from 1887. The prices are good, and the service is first-rate. Credit cards accepted. On Rua da Carioca, 39 in the Centro (☎ 21-2262-6900).

Casa da Suiça ($$$) has a famous Austrian festival and serves the best fondue in the city. Located in the Gloria neighborhood, on Rua Candido Mendes, 157, it opens weekdays from noon to 3 pm and from 7 pm to midnight. On Saturday, open from 7 pm to 1 am; on Sunday, from noon to 4 pm and 7 to 11 pm (☎ 21-2252-5182).

Alt Munchen ($$$) is a little pricey but good. In Leblon, at Rua Dias Ferreira 410.

Japanese

Sushi Leblon

★★★**Sushi Leblon** ($$$$) has the best fish available, even the rare *toro* tuna. It is nearly always packed. Close to the better nightclubs in Leblon on Dias Ferreira, 256.

★★**Madame Butterfly** ($$$$) has creative chefs and the freshest fish, including lobster. There tends to be a mellow crowd with a lot of couples. On Rua Barao de Torre, 472 in Ipanema All credit cards accepted (☎ 21-2267-4347).

★**Shin Miura** ($$$$) is the best Japanese restaurant downtown, with good service and generally busy during the week. On Avenida Rio Branco, 156, third floor. Credit cards accepted (☎ 21-2262-3043).

Middle Eastern

Arab's ($$) is one of the better options in Copacabana. For lunch, there is a plate-by-weight buffet that offers great variety and value. At Avenida Atlantica 1936, facing the beach.

Pizza

★**Capricciosa** ($$), Rua Vinicius de Moraes, 134 in Ipanema, is a busy place with the Carioca-style ultra-thin crust pizzas (☎ 21-2523-3394).

Pizzaria Guanabara ($$), Avenida Ataulfo de Paiva 1228 in Leblon, is a Southern Zone landmark and sells pizza by the slice. A sign forbids "armed persons" from circulating on the premises (☎ 21-2294-0797).

Fratelli of Leblon ($$) serves *pizza D.O.C.* cooked in a brick oven with delicious aromas wafting around for blocks. The pastas are just as good. Credit cards accepted. Avenida General San Martin, 963 (☎ 21-2259-6699).

Polish

Polonesa ($$), Rua Hilário de Gouveia, 116 in Copacabana, is a simple place serving Polish food for dinner through the week, closed on Monday (☎ 21-2547-7378).

Northeastern Food

★**Bar do Arnaudo** ($$) is an unpretentious and simple eatery with huge portions and a great view in Santa Teresa – a landmark of Rio's "bohemian" crowd. On Rua Alm. Alexandrino, 316-B, it opens for lunch and dinner Tuesday through Sunday, but mainly lunch on weekends (☎ 21-2252-7246).

Severina da Gloria ($$) is a relaxed and friendly place with traditional décor and a wide selection of typical northeastern specialties. In the Gloria neighborhood on Rua Santo Amaro 38 (☎ 21-2224-6604).

Severyna of Laranjeiras ($$) is very similar, with good food and lazy service. It is in the Laranjeiras neighborhood on Rua Ipiranga 54. On Monday from 8:30 pm there is *forro* music and on Tuesday-Thursday and Sunday from 8:30 pm there is *samba*.

Steakhouses

Porcão Rio's

★★★**Porcão Rio´s** ($$$$) has one of the best "*rodizios*," with an outstanding view of the Guanabara Bay. If you don't eat meat, the buffet has fresh salads, seafood, sushi, and other delicacies. Caipirinhas are wheeled around and served up from a cart. Near the Gloria Marina downtown, on Avenida Infante Dom Henrique, no number (☎ 21-2554-8535).

★★**Marius** ($$$$) is a traditional Rio steakhouse offering some of the finest Brazilian meats in typical *rodizio* style, with ample buffet for salads, seafood, sushi, and other delicacies. In Leme on Av. Atlantica, 290 (☎ 21-2542-2392).

Seafood

★**Antiquarius** ($$$$$) has fine dining, surrounded by antiques and artworks. One of Rio's most exclusive locations, its pricey cuisine is Portuguese, with an emphasis on simple, elegant presentations. In Leblon, at Rua Aristides Espinola, 19, it's open daily noon-2 am (☎ 21-2294-1049).

★★**Marius Crustáceos** ($$$$) has a buffet and seafood *rodizio*. The buffet has paella, *bacalhau*, grilled fish and crustacians. Accepts all credit cards. Open noon-12 pm every day in Leme, on Avenida Atlântica, 290 (☎ 21-2543-6363).

★★**Satyricon** ($$$$) is also one of the best-known seafood places in the city, served in Mediterranean styles. All credit cards accepted. Open Monday 6 pm-2 am, Tuesday-Saturday noon-2 am, and Sunday noon-midnight. In Ipanema, at Rua Barão da Torre, 192 (☎ 21-2521-0627).

Marius Crustáceos

Albamar ($$$) is a curious old seafood house in a historic landmark downtown overlooking the Guanabara Bay. Try the grouper (*garoupa*). Open for lunch and dinner Tuesday-Saturday, with lunch only on Monday. It is the big green domed building close to the hydrofoil station on Praça Marechal Ancora, 184 (☎ 21-2240-8378).

Spanish

Sea bass and squid are the specialties at ★**Fim de Tarde** ($$$). Accepts all major credit cards. Open Monday through Friday from 11 am to 10 pm. Downtown, on Rua Miguel Couto, 105-B (☎ 21-2516-2409).

La Plancha ($$$) has attractive, traditional Spanish-style décor. Accepts all major credit cards. In the Southern Zone, Ipanema, at Rua Paul Redfern, 44 (☎ 21-2274-6341).

Thai

At **Nam Thai** ($$$) the food is pretty good but geared toward pan-Asian styles rather than authentic Thai. Rua Rainha Guilhermina, 95 in Leblon. Open every day but Monday for dinner (☎ 21-2259-2962).

Varied

The ★★★**Confeitaria Colombo** ($$) is a historic landmark. The first floor has towering mirrors, shining countertops, and wonderful details like stained glass. Try a "Colombo Cup" with someone special: it's made with pistachio ice cream, peach preserves, nuts, chocolate, and whipped cream. Rua Gonçalves Dias, 32 (☎ 21-2232-2300).

The ★ **Forest Cultural Brunch** ($$) at the **Açude Museum** (see *Museums* for details) is also recommended for something a bit different. Held on the last Sunday of every month, the outdoor brunch has shows by renowned musicians with an opportunity to visit the museum. It's a little out of the way, but worth it – you may have to ask a taxi to wait for you for a couple hours (better hotels can help arrange this). From 11:30 am-4:30 pm, with the show at around 2:30 pm. Alto da Boa Vista, Estrada do Açude 764 (☎ 21-3153-9320).

For light dining try **Garcia & Rodrigues** ($$-$$$) in Leblon. The menu is international. Open all day every day but Monday. Accepts all credit cards. Avenida Ataulfo de Paiva, 1251 (☎ 21-3206-4106).

At **Guimas** ($$$) the menu and clientele are a bit pretentious, but a nice change from the routine. Dining outside is pleasant, but the service isn't good. Rua Macedo Soares, 5 in Gávea. (☎ 21-2259-7996).

Vegetarian

★**Natural** ($) is a great option in Ipanema, with natural and vegetarian foods, light fish, chicken, beef and soy dishes and healthy treats, sold by the kilo. Browse the health food store next door. Rua Barão de Torre 167. (☎ 21-2287-0301).

The **Celeiro** ($$) in Leblon is a popular salad bar and vegetarian restaurant with very high standards of cleanliness and presentation. Rua Dias Ferreira, 199 (☎ 21-2274-7843).

Nightlife

Nightclubs

The **Plataforma** has glitzy shows for tourists with statuesque dancers in scanty regalia in Leblon, on Rua Adalberto Ferreira, 32 (☎ 21-2274-4022).

Melt is a restaurant and lounge with a young crowd of Carioca elite. It is in Leblon, on Rua Rita Ludolf, 47, open Monday through Friday from 10 pm, Saturday and Sunday from 7 pm till late (☎ 21-2512-1662 or 21-2249-9309).

Casa da Matriz is a dilapidated mansion with a casual crowd that likes loud rock and Brazilian tunes in Botafogo, on Henrique de Novaes, 107 (☎ 21-2266-1014).

Dance Halls (Gafieiras)

Gafieras are antiquated dance halls in the Centro that are recommended for a glimpse of authentic Carioca nightlife. They date from the 1930s as places for mainly poor Cariocas to dress up and dance the night away. That tradition still exists, and these inexpensive old places remain proof that you don't have to have money to have an elegant night on the town.

The dancing is taken seriously and some formal dancing skills will come in handy. The crowds are friendly and draw people from all ages and backgrounds in a lively atmosphere that keeps going until late. The neighborhoods are not the best places to wander at night but there are plenty of people around and getting a taxi should not be a problem.

Gafieira Estudantina dates from 1932 and is the most famous, with capacity for 1,500 people. Open Thursday, Friday, and Saturday from 11 pm to around 3 am. Praça Tiradentes, 79 (☎ 21-2232-1149). **Gafieira Elite**, at Rua Frei Caneca 4, is a little smaller, but just as popular (☎ 21-2232-3217), with *pagode* on Fridays from 5 pm to 11 pm and *forró* on Saturdays from 10 pm to 5 am.

Classical Music

The **Cecília Meireles Room** is a concert hall with great acoustics, close to the nightlife in **Lapa**, with some of the best classical music in the city – tickets sold from 1 pm to 6 pm. at Largo da Lapa 47. (☎ 21-2232-9311).

The **Municipal Theatre** (Teatro Muncipal) at Praça Cinelandia in the Centro, has ballet, opera, and orchestral music. Consult the ticket office for presentations or check the local newspapers. Tickets are sold from 10 am; credit cards not accepted (☎ 21-2299-1717).

LAPA: LATIN AMERICA'S HOTTEST NIGHTLIFE

Lapa, under the arches on Praça Cardeal Camara, has been the place to go for a wild night on the town for over 100 years. A Colonial red-light district and modern "bohemian" zone, this decrepit neighborhood of urban and cultural landmarks got a face lift in recent years and has gone from being a dicey alternative spot to the epicenter of nightlife in Brazil.

Music lovers really should not miss Lapa – there is something here for people of all ages and budgets, ranging from sophisticated bars and big-name bands to street-side drumming with the locals. Typically, around 10 pm a crowd starts to form under the arches where Cariocas, many from nearby favelas, bring down the living samba with onlookers free to join in the fun. The bars listed in this chapter have been upgraded with investments in security, acoustics and design but retain the popular down-to-earth feel that has always distinguished Lapa from any other neighborhood on earth.

From Thursday through Saturday, the crowds slowly fill up the bars and dance halls. By midnight, Latin jazz, rock, samba and Brazilian pop spills out into the street and continues until dawn.

Some of the bars listed here are a little remote from the arches but you should not miss taking at least a quick look. It is still not a great neighborhood if you get away from the crowds. If coming from the Southern Zone by taxi, you will probably pass through the arches, so take note. If you are more than a few blocks away, take a taxi back to the arches, or walk there if you are close.

Playboys, street kids, bearded bohemians, glittering socialites, transvestites, gringos and fun-lovers of all shapes and sizes converge in a congenial mix, wandering through the crowd or in and out of the bars. Street merchants hawk wares from styrofoam boxes or the backs of vans. They sell hot dogs, grilled meats, and mixed drinks such as one called *Dá Ásas*, which means "gives wings" (cheap domestic whisky, usually in Johnny Walker bottles, mixed with Red Bull).

During Carnival this is a popular spot for costumed street parades. Occasionally there are open-air concerts and arts and crafts fairs in the plaza. It's easy to get here and back by a taxi. Lapa has been called the best nightlife in Brazil.

Live Music

Asa Branca, in Lapa, is famous for heavily syncopated, Northeastern-style *forró* (Wednesday through Monday, starting around 10 pm to midnight), samba mixed with pop called *pagode* (Tuesday, from 7 pm), and *samba* on Saturday from noon to 8 pm, when a *feijoada* is served. On Friday there is salon dancing. Some but not all of the ladies here seem like "professional" types. It is at Avenida Mem de Sa, 17. Open from 10 pm till as late as 7 am on the weekends (☎ 21-2224-2342).

★★**Art and Progress Foundry** (Fundiçao Arte e Progresso) is a surreal venue under the Lapa Arches, once a foundry for safes and ovens. Shows wth big-name artists sell out quickly but there are always scalpers hanging around. Check local papers like *O Globo* on Saturday for listings. It is the big building in Lapa on Rua dos Arcos, 24/50 (☎ 21-2220-5070).

Comuna de Semente has live samba and choro with a crowd on Monday, and some of the best up-and-coming musicians in Brazil, but this house run by communists from Rio Grande do Sul is cramped, deliberately non-commercial and does not get going till after 10 pm. Lapa, Rua Joaquim Silva 138 (☎ 21-2242-5165).

★★★**Rio Scenarium** is an old mansion with three floors of brick salons. There are eclectic decorations and nooks to sit or floors to dance. The food is good but the service is mediocre. Highly recommended. Lapa at Rua do Lavradio, 2 – you should take a taxi if going to or from the bars close to the arches (☎ 21-3852-5516).

★★**Café Musical Carioca da Gema** is famous for Brazilian popular music and *samba*. Things get going here late on Friday and Saturday nights, they don't tend to stop until the wee hours. Lapa, Av. Mem de Sá, 81 (☎ 21-3970-1461).

★**Circo Voador** is a big venue, part of Brazilian musical history, with mostly new musicians on their way to the big time. Rua dos Arcos, no number, in Lapa (☎ 21-2533-0354).

★★**Mixtura Caricoa**, in a converted 1907 mansion, is a cultural landmark with two bars, dance floor, stage and three halls. There is mostly *samba* and *choro*. Get there early. Open Monday though Friday in the evenings on Rua Gomes Freire, 773 (☎ 21-2221-2072 or 21-2509-4237).

★**Rival Theatre** (Teatro Rival) **is** a dank café with great shows and horrible food. Stick to all things bottled. You can get tickets in front ahead of time for big shows. Rua Álvaro Alvim, 33, in the Cinelandia neighborhood of the Centro (☎ 21-2240-4469).

Bip Bip, a fun little bar in Copacabana, has *choro* on Tuesday and *samba* on Sunday. Both get going late. Rua Almirante Gonçalves 50, shop D (☎ 21-2267-9696).

Canecão is the best venue for big-name artists. Scalpers hang out in front. The food is a legitimate health risk! Av. Vesceslau Bras, 215, in Botafogo (☎ 21-2543-1241).

Vinicius, a bar in Ipanema, draws a lot of tourists, but the shows are authentic. Rua Vinicius de Moraes, 39 (☎ 21-2287-1497 or 21-2523-4757).

Gay Nightlife

Gay culture in Rio does not stick to specific neighborhoods or bars. Women tend to be more "out" than men, but as a rule Cariocas don't waste time worrying about other people's sexual orientation. Some of the well known "gay clubs" might seem boring, tacky or snobbish to many people. Straight Carioca couples go to these clubs too, as a "hip" thing to do.

To meet people the best places are parties, promoted by websites and fliers on the gay section of Ipanema beach (you can't miss the rainbow flag). Two of the most popular are "Bitch" and "X-Demente," both held on an irregular basis. They tend to take place in large spaces like the huge **Art and Progress Foundry** in Lapa, or the **Gloria Marina**. As the venues are always changing, your best option is the Internet. The website www.ipanema.com.br has some basic info on culture and nightlife for gay people in Rio as well.

In the Southern Zone, the **Galeria Café** (☎ 21-2523-8250) dance club is near Rua Farme de Amoedo and Rua Teixeira de Melo, 31 in Ipanema – open Wednesday through Saturday from 10 pm with a mostly gay crowd. **Dama de Ferro** (☎ 21-2247-2330 or 2509-4237) is a landmark dance club, lounge and art gallery in Ipanema, on Rua Vinicius de Moraes, 288. Open Wednesday through Saturday from 10 pm.

Le Boy (☎ 21-2513-4993) is another well known dance club in Copacabana, at Rua Raul Pompeia, 102. Open every day but Tuesday, from 11 pm on. Right next door is **La Girl** (☎ 21-2247-8342) for women.

Bunker 94 (☎ 21-2521-0367) is a late-night dance club that draws a crowd on Sundays, but it has seen better days. It's in Copacabana at Rua Raul Pompeia, 94, and open Thursday through Sunday from 11:30 pm.

Bars, Lounges & Botequins

Academia da Cachaça has 2,000 different types of cachaça at Rua Conde Bernadotte, 26 Shop G. Open Tuesday through Friday from 12 pm to 2 am and Monday from 5 pm to 2 am. Credit cards not accepted (☎ 21-2239-1542).

Adega Pérola in Copacabana was founded in 1957 by five Portuguese brothers and offers typical Portuguese snacks, with a very good selection of cachaças. Rua Siqueira Campos, 138. Open Monday through Saturday 10 am-midnight (☎ 21-2255-9425).

★★**Bar Bracarense** fills up with "regulars" in beach wear, who own their own folding metal tables out in front. The service is lousy, but the snacks are the best in the city. Credit cards not accepted. Leblon, on Rua Jose Linhares, 85 (☎ 21-2294-3549).

★★**Bar Lagoa** is a casual, employee-owned outdoor bar with German snacks, cold beer and a view of the Lagoon on Avenida Epitácio Pessoa 1674 in Ipanema. The grumpy waiters are legendary (☎ 21-2523-1135).

Botequim Informal

★**Botequim Informal** is a hit among 30-somethings in Leblon, with a buffet. Open Tuesday-Thursday 6 pm-1 am and Friday-Sunday noon-1 am. Rua Conde de Bernardote 26 loja O (☎ 21-2540-5504) and at Shopping Leblon, Rua Afranio de Melo Franco, 290 piso L4, loja 402A (☎ 21-2529-2614).

★**Café Caroline** lounge and eatery draws a laid-back, young crowd. Upstairs is a dance club, and downstairs is a restaurant-bar, with outdoor areas on both floors. It is in the Jardim Botanico, on Rua J.J. Seabra, 10 (☎ 21-2540-0075).

Garota de Ipanema is a touristy bar and is the place where Vinicius de Moraes and Tom Jobim wrote their amorous lyrics about the *Girl from Ipanema*. In Ipanema, on Rua Vinicius de Moraes, 49A (☎ 21-2523-3787).

★**Irish Pub** is what you might expect – a loud bunch of gringos and Brazilians enjoying drinks, snacks, and pub games. Ipanema, on Rua Jangadeiros, 14A (☎ 21-2513-3044).

★★**Jobi** is the star of Leblon's casual chic, with excellent food. The menu offers traditional treats like *bolinhos de bacalhau* and a savory sliced *picanha* in butter and herbs. Or try the squid and spinich *risotto.* Leblon, Av. Ataulfo de Paiva, 1166 (☎ 21-2274-0547).

Hipodromo is a casual pizzaria in Baixo Gavea that serves drinks. It gets lively on Fridays when young, barefoot "tic tac toe" sharks will challenge you to a game for coins. Praça Santos Dumont, 108 (☎ 21-2274-9720).

Lord Jim Pub is an English-style pub, catering to locals and gringos with loud rock and roll. Here you will find snacks, drinks, and quiz games in English. Ipanema, on Rua Paul Redfern, 63 (☎ 21-2259-3047).

★★**Kiosks of Lagoa** are dozens of outdoor bars, with free shows in the summer and a fun crowd. The kiosks open at 4 pm and stay open late. Avenida Borges de Medieros, no number, on the Leblon side of the Lagoon, near the Espaço Victor Assis Brasil park.

Shenanigans Irish Pub draws a lot of gringos and Brazilians who like them. Serves snacks and drinks in a pub atmosphere with darts and games. Ipanema, Rua Visconde de Piraja, 112 (☎ 21-2267-5860).

The Sun Coast

Armação de Búzios, Arraial do Cabo & Cabo Frio

- Catch some rays at the "St. Tropez" of Brazil
- Dive the plankton-rich waters of the Atlantic resurgence
- Enjoy fine dining and international nightlife

Aerial image of Búzíos

The region to the northeast of Rio de Janeiro is known as the Sun Coast (Costa do Sol), or sometimes the Lakes Region (Região dos Lagos) because of the **Araruama Lake**, one of the largest in Brazil. Various cities dot the coastline, but the best destination is the triad of cities on the bend in the South American coastline from an east-west direction to a north-south direction: **Armação de Búzios**, **Arraial do Cabo** and **Cabo Frio**. This popular resort area is well developed for tourism – some would say too well developed. A little more arid than Rio, the surrounding terrain is dry scrubland, the sun here shines up to 270 days out of the year and the beaches are great. There is very good scuba diving due to an Atlantic resurgence phenomenon that brings chilled, plankton-filled currents from the deepest trenches of the Atlantic shelf up to the coast where they feed the entire food chain.

Archeologists now think indigenous groups lived here 5,000 years ago, and many artifacts from this region are on display in the museums of Rio de Janeiro. Portuguese, Dutch and French explorers found lots of indigenous tribes when they arrived in 1500s. The French were most successful, since they befriended the Tamoios, but the Portuguese finally drove them out in 1575 and took over. A few French pirates remained, hiding along the convoluted coastline, and continued to prey

Arraial do Cabo

on Portuguese shipping until the mid-1600s in areas like **Búzios**. The history of piracy is part of the region's romantic past.

The nightlife gets very active during the Brazilian summer months as Cariocas on vacation and the international jet set flock here for rest and relaxation. You can expect a lot of crowds and inflated prices then, but you will also enjoy first-class lodging, high standards of service and some of the best dining at any resort area in Brazil. **Arraial de Cabo** is more rustic and has the best diving, while **Cabo Frio** has less of a resort atmosphere, but is still one of the top weekend party towns for Cariocas and is cheaper – with nice beaches too.

How to Get Here

Overland to the Sun Coast from Rio de Janeiro takes from three to four hours. By car, cross the Rio-Niterói Bridge and immediately take the off-ramp to the left toward Rio Bonito. Follow the signs to the exit for the Via Lagos Highway toward Araruama-Cabo Frio. It gets confusing after the tollgate at the bridge, so pay attention and stay on your left. At the end of this highway is a town called São Pedro da Aldeia. To get to Búzios, take RJ 106 toward Macaé-Búzios (near the Ipiranga gas station at the entrance to town). About 8.7 miles (14 km) later, right after the Até Que Enfim gas station, veer right and drive 10 minutes until you reach Búzios. To get to Cabo Frio and Arraial do Cabo, at São Pedro da Aldeia, instead of RJ 106, at the roundabout of São Cristóvão, at the end of the Avenida America Central, get onto Highway RJ-140, which connects Cabo Frio and Arraial do Cabo. It is eight miles (13 km) to Cabo Frio. Road maps are available at newsstands in Rio.

By bus, **Auto Viação 1001** offers comfortable executive *leitos* direct to Cabo Frio, Arraial do Cabo and Búzios from the **Novo Rio Bus Station** in Rio (toll free ☎ 0800-25-1001 or 21-2516-1001). Schedules are subject to change but you should not have difficulty getting a ticket, except on major holidays. To Arraial or Búzios direct buses are more convenient, but you can go to Cabo Frio, which has more frequent buses, and then take a bus or taxi. The local bus line **Viação Salineira**, has departures every 20 minutes to and from Cabo Frio and Búzios. A taxi between Cabo Frio and Búzios will cost about $15 (less to Arraial do Cabo). Finer hotels in Búzios offer comfortable ground transfer to and from Rio de Janeiro, usually for a fee. From Rio you can also charter a yacht (see *Rio de Janeiro Adventures*) to the Sun Coast. From other destinations you might consider flying, or take a bus. In Cabo Frio, there is a small **airport** on Estrada Adolfo Beranger Júnior (☎ 22-2622-2291) and in Búzios (☎ 22-2629-1225).

When to Go

The Sun Coast is sunny year-round. Even during the rainy season (August to November), it doesn't rain much and this can be the best time to go, since the crowds thin out and prices fall (plus you have a chance to see humpback whales). The busy season is from December to March and major holidays, when the population of Buzios expands five times over. The region has a tropical semi-arid climate, with extreme temperatures. Summer temperatures range from 72-97°F (22-36°C) and winter temperatures from 59-86°F (15-30°C). In **Búzios**, there are occasional water shortages due to the influx of tourists in the summer.

Armação de Búzios

Armação de Búzios (usually just "Búzios") is nestled on a sun-blessed peninsula about 58 miles (180 km) northeast of Rio. This sophisticated resort town is one of the most gorgeous coastal cities of the Southeast region, ranking seventh among Brazilian cities for international tourism. Famous for its wild nightlife, beaches, and arts, Búzios still retains the rustic charm of a centuries-old fishing village with the vaguely Mediterranean veneer of a tourist town. This former Colonial whaling colony was unheard of until the 1960s, when Brigitte Bardot started hanging out here. Ever since it has been called "Brazil's St. Tropez." Brigitte Bardot is to the city what Paul Revere is to Boston, having heralded the arrival of the greenbacks. Grateful residents dedicated a statue, a cinema, and a boardwalk in her honor. While not quite the French Riviera, Búzios is an international city, port of call for international cruise lines, and a romantic destination for couples.

The 20,000 residents include immigrants from 40 different countries, who run *pousadas*, restaurants and shops, including some very elegant ones. During the day, the beaches have sailing and windsurfing, and the kiosks along the boardwalk sell fried fish and icy beer, while at night the excellent restaurants and bars keep the action going. The scrub vegetation and forest areas around the city and its beaches are nature preserves with endangered wildlife, such as the golden lion monkey.

To get away from the crowds, rent a mountain bike to explore trails and find secluded beaches (see *Side-Trips*). Boat trips are a great way to see the coastline and the deserted islands like **Ilha Rasa**. From August to November, humpback whales can be seen migrating north to **Abrolhos**

in Bahia to mate. There is good snorkeling and scuba diving but the visibility is not as good as at Arraial do Cabo. If there is a downside to Búzios, it is the swarm of out-of-towners who cause shortages of water and parking, tarnishing the charm of this once-isolated jewel with its whitewashed balustrades and red tiled roofs overlooking the azure Atlantic. If you don't mind the "touristy" feel to the town, and the prices, bustling Búzios is definitely worth the visit.

Getting Around

Getting around is easy on foot, but a car, buggy or public transport helps. There are three settlements. **Ossos** on the northeastern tip has a picturesque harbor and the Brigitte Bardot boardwalk. **Manguinhos** on the isthmus offers more secluded beaches. And the nightlife is in the middle of the downtown area called **Armação**.

Búzios recently upgraded its street signs, lighting, and tourist infrastructure. At the city gate is a **Secretary of Tourism office** (☎ 22-2623-2099). There is also one on the main square downtown. The main road is **Estrada José Bento Ribeiro Dantas**. Downtown, it becomes **Rua das Pedras**, and on the other side it is **Orla Bardot**, which takes you onto **Praia dos Ossos** and the entrance of **Praia Azeda**. From this road, sidestreets lead to the beaches. The main commercial district, with grocery stores and pharmacies, is near **Geribá** beach. The **Estrada da Usina** is another important road leading to **João Fernandes**, **Brava** and **Forno** beaches.

The **Bus Station** is at Estrada da Usina Velha, 44 (Shopping Tatwy) ☎ 22-2623-2050. The city has mini-buses and vans. The signal is to pinch your fingers rapidly as they approach and the driver will flash his lights when he sees you. Both cost about a dollar.

Take the fun **Búzios Trolley** (a bus) to learn the city layout. **Taxi stands** downtown: Ponto Praça Santos Dumont (☎ 22-2623-2160 or 22-2623-6169); Búzios Rádio Táxi (☎ 22-2623-1911 or 22-2623-2892); Ponto Shopping Number 1 (☎ 22-2623-2160 or 22-2623-6169). **Aconchego Rent-a-Car** has cars and dune buggies, with delivery and pick-up service, at Praia João Fernandes 1 (Pousada Ilha Branca), ☎ 22-2623-2443. Most *pousadas* can also arrange a dune buggy for $30-50, or a scooter.

In high season, newsstands sell a booklet called *Guia Verão Búzios* for a few dollars, with places to stay and nightlife options in English, which is recommended.

Currency Exchange

A lot of hotels trade cash in Búzios, but better rates are at the *casas de câmbio* on Rua das Pedras and Rua Turibe de Farias Downtown. **Maliza Tour**, is at Avenida Bento Ribeiro Dantas, 100 (Rua das Pedras), ☎ 22-2623-2022. **Banco do Brasil** is at Rua Manoel de Carvalho 70, in Armação. There are ATMs in town, especially around Rua das Pedras.

Events & Festivals

Visa Búzios Jazz & Blues Festival: July, Rua das Pedras.

Film Festival: No fixed date, at Gran Cine Bardot/Praça Santos Dumont.

For More Information

The Internet sites, www.buziosturismo.com and www.buziosonline.com.br, have information about where to stay, what to do and where to eat.

Sightseeing

For guided sightseeing, the ★**Búzios Trolley Bus** makes a half-hour circuit through the city beaches and sights (with stops for a dip). It leaves three times per day from the Shopping Center 1 with drop-off at your hotel and costs about $10 (☎ 22-2623-2763 or 22-9953-0662). A **Jeep Tour** takes two or three hours, including off-road trails (☎ 22-2623-6766).

Definitely visit the lookout points, **Mirante do Forno** at Praia do Forno, or the overlook above, **Praia João Fernandes**. An important historic site is the **Church of Sant'Anna**, built in 1740 from rocks, plaster and whale oil. Between **Armação** and **Ossos**, on Travessa de Santana, 102. (☎ 22-2623-6771 or 22-2623-6530).

Adventures

On Water

★★Beaches

The southern beaches are more remote but are the best options. The southernmost is **Praia de Tucuns**, which extends for about a mile, with rustic bars offering drinks and snacks, and surrounded by the natural scrub vegetation that extends to the dunes. Access is by the Old Cabo Frio Highway. **Praia de Geribá** is usually crowded with sun worshippers. It's on the south of the peninsula, in a very upscale area.

Paria da Geribá

Next is **Praia da Ferradurinha** with fine white sand surrounded by rocks. **Praia da Ferradura**, shaped like a horseshoe and ringed by mansions and cactus, has kiosks famous for their fried fish and shrimp. Access is by foot along a trail from the left side of Geribá beach facing the ocean. **Praia da Foca**, after **Ferradurinha**, has calm cold water and a natural pool surrounded by rock walls. Next, rounding the isthmus north, is **Praia do Forno**, which gets its name ("furnace beach") from the exotic reddish sand. It's surrounded by wild scrub vegetation and offers seclusion from the crowds. **Praia Olho-de-Boi** is a nudist beach, difficult to access and secluded. The trail to the beach is steep, and starts on the right side of **Praia Brava**, which faces the open sea and has very heavy surf – popular mainly for surfers.

Sant'Anna Church

Rounding the northern tip, **Praia de João Fernandes** has a row of bars and restaurants that serve drinks and seafood. Usually fairly crowded, here you can rent a jet-ski, ride the banana boat, rent a kayak or go parasailing. **Praia de João Fernandinho** is the continuation of João Fernandes, and a lot of tourists prefer it. **Praia Azeda** is long, with crystal blue waters and powdery white sand like the Caribbean. Access is along a trail that begins on the right side of Praia dos Ossos. **Azedinha**, only about 150 feet long, is situated between rocky outcroppings and more remote. **Praia dos Ossos** (bones beach) got its name from the whale carcass found here once. Here you can catch a schooner for a cruise around the coastline. Up above on the left is the historic **Sant'Anna Church**.

Praia da Armação starts at Rua das Pedras. The long, straight beach is mainly a harbor for boats, but there is a little windsurfing. This is where the pier is and there is an interesting life-size bronze statue of fishermen by a local artist. **Praia do Canto** in the center of town is , 2,952 ft (900 m) long, with calm, clear water. It's not very popular because it is so close to the bars, restaurants and hotels. Here there are mostly fishing boats. **Praia da Tartaruga** has a great view and is one of the most popular beaches during the day, with crowds of young people listening to loud music around the kiosks. It is between the points of Sapata and Da Cruz, and cut in half by a rocky outcropping.The trail on the left leads to Manguinhos through the scrub vegetation. The four-mile **Praia de Manguinhos** is weird because of the trees that whistle in the wind. From here you can see the Feia and Rasa islands. **Praia Rasa** is at the left side of Manguinhos, calm with a strong wind for windsurfing.

Windsurfing & Sailing

You can rent Hobie Cats, lasers, kayaks and boards or take lessons. Ferradura and Tartaruga are for beginners, while Raza and Manguinhos are more fun. **Happy Surf** is at Praia da Ferradura, offering instruction and rentals of windsurfers, lasers, and 16-foot Hobie Cats (☎ 22-2623-2016 or 9972-7493). **Yucas Beach Club**, near Manguinhos beach, is at Rua Maurício Dutra, 356. It offers rental of lasers and windsurfers with instruction (☎ 22-2623-2001). **Búzios Vela Club**, near Manguinhos beach, is at Rua Maurício Dutra, 303, with rentals of laser class boats and windsurfing with instruction (☎ 22-2623-6206).

Kitesurfing

Búzios Kitesurf School offers lessons in English and equipment rentals (about $30) for students who have taken the IKO level three course. Contact Eduardo Graf at info@kitenews.com.br (☎ 21-0241-9393 or 22-2620-0016).

Kayaking

Happy Surf at **Praia da Ferradura** rents kayaks (☎ 22-2623-2016 or 9972-7493).

Wakeboarding & Water Skiing

Day Off de Búzios, on the left side of **Praia da Ferradura**, offers wakeboarding and water skiing, as well as Banana-ski and speedboat rides (☎ 22-9908-9314 or 22-9811-2309).

★★Scuba Diving

Búzios is a very good diving location with high-quality operators and a scenic locale. Visibility here is not great – around 40 feet normally – but can reach 90 feet or more on a good day. In May forget it, as visibility drops to barely 12 feet. Another problem is the heavy boat traffic, so be careful when surfacing. Water temperature is around 66.2-75.2°F (19-24°C) up to about 80 feet depth, but it gets a lot colder on deep dives due to resurgence.

There are basically two options for diving: 1) oceanic dives with better visibility up to six miles off the coast (just under an hour boat ride), and 2) sheltered dives that are closer, with less visibility but better sea life. Typically there are corals, anchovies, tuna, bonitos, barracudas, and especially green turtles here, thanks to the **Tamar Project**, aimed at preserving their population. There are even whale sharks if you are lucky.

Two dives with full equipment rental cost around $40. Snacks, mineral water and soft drinks are included. Night dives are available.

Two dive operators are recommended. **Casamar** (PDIC certified), on Rua das Pedras, 242 Downtown (near the pier), has a 50-foot trawler with space for 25 divers, a depth finder, GPS, first aid and oxygen, radio and inflatable motor boat for surface support of divers. Tanks are filled with electronic monitoring. (www.casamar.com.br, ☎ 22-2623-2441 or 22-2623-1302). **True Blue** has multilingual guides, a 40-foot boat with shelter that holds 24 divers plus crew, plus bathroom and oxygen on board. Rua das Pedras, 212, near the pier. (www.trueblue.com.br, ☎ 22-2623-2357 or 22-9212-8554).

Snorkeling

At **João Fernandes** beach you can rent snorkeling gear for about $5 per day. Snorkeling is also good at **Lagoinha**, **Forno**, **Tartaruga**, **Caravelas**, **Ossos**, **Azeda** and **Azedinha**. **Caboclo Island**, about 200 meters from Praia do Canto beach (Armaçâo beach) has coral formations.

★★Coastal Excursions

Búzios has great boat trips around the coast and the tropical islands of the region. Options range from schooners and sailboats to fishing trawlers and glass-bottom catamarans. Schooners leave from the pier at Praia da Armação and pass along the beaches of Azeda, João Fernandes, Canto, Virgem, Amores and Tartaruga, as well as numerous pirate hideouts. The two- to five-hour trip includes tropical fruits, juices, soft drinks and *caipirinhas*, the local cocktail, with stops to swim at gorgeous locations. Prices are around $10 or $15 per person.

Queen Lory Tours with English-speaking guides is at Rua João Fernandes, 89, near Praia dos Ossos. Credit cards accepted. Open daily 8:30 am to 5:30 pm. Boat leaves 9:30 am, noon and 3 pm. (☎ 22-2623-1179). You can also try **Escuna Buziana** (☎ 22-2623-2990), or **Escuna Miss Búzios e Victoria** (☎ 22-2623-6454).

The Caribbean-style **Catamaran excursion** is the only glass-hulled boat in the city. It stops at beaches and islands along the way with a freshwater shower and bathrooms on board (☎ 22-2623-5433 or 22-9972-6990).

Adventures on Land

Golf

★Buzios Golf Club & Resort has a very good 18-hole, par-72 course designed by Pete and Perry Dye with five tees for every hole, eight lakes and 65 benches. The putting green has 18 holes. The green fee is about $50 with equipment rental for about $15, and cart rental for 18 holes was $30. Use of the driving range is about $5 plus $1 per bucket of balls. There are discounts for groups. Avenida 1, Área Especial 04-B, Rasa. (www.buziosgolf.com.br, ☎ 22-2629-1240/1448 or in Rio, 21-2522-1188).

Nature Walks

In the **Tauá** preserve, there are more than 300 varieties of butterflies and 600 types of birds, and in the **Serra das Emerencias** preserve you can spot exotic and endangered golden lion monkeys. Near the beaches of Olho-de-Boi, Lagoinha and José Gonçalves (see *Side-Trip*) have unspoiled scrub vegetation. There is also a Brazil wood forest preserve that stretches from Tucuns beach all the way to Cabo Frio. The **Búzios Atlantic Rainforest Institute** (IEMBA) has nature walks in the reserve along various trails on Monday, Wednesday and Friday. Bring sunscreen, mineral water, light clothing and comfortable shoes. IEBMA is at the Estrada Velha de Búzios, no number (Km 5), but the walks leave from various points. Call for information (☎ 22-2623-2200 or 22-2623-2446). **Aventur** also offers guided nature hikes (☎ 22-2623-1709).

Golden lion monkey

Mountain Biking

Biking is a great way to explore the trails around the city, currently costing about $20 per day. Maps and rentals are available at the following outfitters: **Armação Bikes** (☎ 22-9213-4597), on Manoel de Carvalho, 229, **Bike Rentals** (☎ 22-2623-2613), on Rua João Fernandes, 144, Praia dos Ossos, or **Bike Tours**, with or without guides, at Rua das Pedras, 266, shop four.

Where to Stay

Accommodations in Búzios are good, but can be expensive. The places on Rua das Pedras tend to be noisy. There is a 10% service charge and 5% room tax, but sometimes this is included. Normally, reservations require a 50% deposit in advance.

★★**Brava Hotel** ($$$$$) is a luxury hotel with panoramic view of the hills and ocean, offering transfer services. Rua 17, Quadra 0, Lote 14 in Praia Brava (☎ 22-2623-5943).

★**The Colonna Beach Hotel** ($$$$) is a very comfortable spot with ocean-view balconies and suites with whirlpool baths. at Praia de João Fernandes (☎ 22-2623-1958).

★**The Pousada Byblos** ($$$) has a view of Armação beach and is three minutes from Rua das Pedras and close to other beaches. Rua Alto do Humaitá, 14 Downtown (☎ 22-2623-1162).

Casagrande ($$$) has panoramic ocean views and individual balconies, set in a tasteful Mediterranean-style villa. Near João Fernandes beach, at Rua 8, Quadra B, Lote 18 (☎ 22-2623-2661).

COLONNA
BEACH HOTEL
Colonna Beach Hotel

Pousada Hibuscus Beach

Pousada Afrika ($$) has pool, steam sauna and rooms with views of the sea, of Armação beach and Ilha Feia. Near the beaches and a short walk from Rua das Pedras. Credit cards are not accepted. Estrada Usina Nova 444, downtown near Armação (☎ 22-2623-1157).

Pousada das Amoras ($) is a nice, cheap *pousada* with homemade blackberry jam for breakfast, pool, air-conditioning and ceiling fans in simple rooms. A short walk from Rasa beach and Rua das Pedras on Avenida Greta Blanc do Rio, 82 (☎ 22-2623-2616 or 22-9834-7002).

Pousada Casamar ($$) gives a 5% discount to divers. In the middle of the action on Rua das Pedras, 242, it can be noisy. Rooms have air-conditioning (☎ 22-2623-1302 or 2623-2441).

Pousada Hibiscus Beach ($$) has British owners with an English-speaking staff, a large tropical garden and pool at Rua 1, Number 22, Quadra C, Praia de João Fernandes (☎ 22-2623-6221).

Spas

The seaside **Spa Búzios Ferradura** ($$$$) has seven habitations with gym, massage, yoga television room, dining, indoor gardens, esoteric healing and sports medicine services, leisure walks, horseback riding, swimming, windsurfing, and sailing. Praia da Ferradura, 56 in the Condomínio Atlântico (☎ 22-2623-2996 or 22-2623-4657).

The **Spa Ligia Azevedo** ($$$$) has aesthetic and body treatments, pool, sauna, yoga, nature walks, and anti-stress programs, plus optional light meals in partnership with local restaurants. Rua 17, Quadra 0, Lote 14 in Praia Brava. Ground transfer from Rio costs about $60 per person (☎ 21-2495-9191 or 21-2495-5959).

Resort

★The **Búzios Ecoresort** ($$$) is on the seaside, with a nature preserve, private beach, and transfers to and from Rio de Janeiro. Breakfast is not included, but all apartments and chalets have kitchenettes. Estrada Velha de Búzios, no number, at Praia da Caravelas (☎ 22-2623-6552, 22-2633-9085, 22-2623-3427, or 22-2623-0257).

Nightlife

The nightlife is blazing hot in Búzios, when crowds of scorched foreign tourists mingle with the laid-back locals all bellowing in an incomprehensible jabber. The epicenter of this mind-boggling mix of beautiful people is a single cobbled street called ★★★**Rua da Pedras** where the bars, gourmet restaurants and shops empty out during the day and at night explode with raucous crowds of merrymakers until the sun comes up.

There are options for all palates – restaurants, bars, nightclubs, shows and parties – though dining is expensive. After dinner you can explore the shops and art galleries that attract crowds of tanned and beautiful vacationers out for some fun.

Where to Eat

Dining out is a pleasure in Búzios, with many excellent restaurants.

★★**Satyricon** ($$$$) is famous for its fresh fish at lunch or dinner, but if you prefer meats you will not be disappointed. Avenida José Ribeiro Dantas 500, on Orla Bardot (☎ 22-2623-1595).

★The **Acquerello** ($$$-$$$$) serves French and Italian cuisine for dinner with a delicatessen you can browse before or after you eat. Rua das Pedras, 130 (☎ 22-2623-2817).

★The **Cigalon** ($$$$) offers French dining and wines. Reservations suggested. Rua das Pedras, 199, Centro, Praia do Canto (☎ 22-2623-6284 or 22-9217-3357).

★**Pátio Havana** ($$$) has five separate environments for dinner with live music on Fridays and Saturdays. Seafood is the house specialty but there are other options. Rua das Pedras 101 (☎ 22-2623-2169).

Pátio Havana

Sawasdee ($$$) serves great Thai cuisine for dinner. For a fixed price you can request a completely personalized, 10-dish feast. Av. José Bento Ribeiro Dantas 422, on Orla Bardo. Closed during low season on Wednesdays (☎ 22-2633-4644).

For Bahian food the **Bistrô da Baiana** ($$) is recommended for dinner.Rua Manoel de Carvalho 11, downtown. Credit cards not accepted (☎ 22-2623-6285).

Buzin ($$) has an affordable buffet sold by weight for lunch or dinner. Rua Manoel Turíbio de Farias (☎ 22-2623-4317).

Galeto Chopp ($$) serves roasted chickens (*galetos*) and cold beer at Rua Cesar Augusto Sã Luiz 40, downtown (☎ 22-2623-8223).

Pizzaria Macaia Café ($$) on Rua das Pedras, 60, downtown, is a popular place (☎ 22-2623-2155), as is **Pizzaria Capricciosa** on Av. José Bento Ribeiro Dantas, 478 in nearby Armação (☎ 22-2633-1595).

Samsara ($) uses only organic vegetables for its vegetarian fare. Rua Santana Maia, shop 1, downtown (☎ 22-2623-1080).

Arraial do Cabo

Arraial do Cabo is 112 miles (180 km) northeast of Rio de Janeiro. It is one of the oldest settlements in Latin America and in 1503 Amerigo

Vespucci set foot here, establishing one of Brazil's first successful colonies. There are even older artifacts gathered from archeological sites of the indigenous dwellings dating back thousands of years. Once an isolated fishing colony and salt producer, it became a tourist attraction in the 1960s. This town of 35,000 people is simpler than Búzios. The main attraction is the ocean and the gorgeous white sand beaches and dunes. At an auspicious bend in the coastline, Arraial do Cabo sees a nutrient-rich current of cold water from the coast of Argentina. For this reason, the beaches facing the open sea are a few degrees colder than nearby Búzios. The waters are teeming with fish, turtles, crustaceans, and other sea creatures, including occasional dolphins, whales and sharks. Arraial is one of the best spots in the region for scuba diving.

There are hikes to ruins, ocean excursions, dunes for sand sledding, and lookout points where you can admire the ocean view, the big Arauama Lake and the nearby salt pits of the once-grandiose Companhia Nacional de Alcalis. The town has plenty of simple accommodations that are comfortable and affordable. At night it is a bit quiet. For mingling with the crowd, there are plenty of bars, restaurants and places with a more casual and relaxed atmosphere, but a trip to nearby Búzios might be in order for night owls.

Getting Around

Arraial do Cabo is an isthmus, with one road in. As you come into the city from Cabo Frio, you will see Praia Grande on your right and white sand dunes on your left. When you enter the city gate you can pick up tourist information.

The **Secretary of Tourism** is downtown at Av. da Liberdade, 50 (☎ 22-2622-1650, extension 343). As you enter the city the beach called Prainha is down below on your left. While this is a popular area, most of what the city has to offer is farther in. If you come by bus, you will stop at the **Bus Station** (☎ 22-2622-1488) at Rua D. Pedro I, in front of the Praça Castelo Branco in the downtown area. From here it is a short walk to **Praia dos Anjos**, which is the center of activity. In the other direction, a bit farther away, you can walk in about 40 minutes to **Praia Grande**. It helps to have a car or bike in Arraial do Cabo, but you can get around on foot.

Driving can be confusing through the maze of one-way streets and poorly marked streets. The beach is your main reference point. A city bus, **Viação Salineira** (☎ 22-2645-5454), runs from Arraial do Cabo to **Cabo Frio**, stopping at various points along the way for 50 cents.

Sightseeing

The **Manoel Camargo Cultural Center** (Centro Cultural Manoel Carmargo) is the main arts complex, with a venue for local artists and a display of indigenous artifacts from the local archeological sites and items recovered from shipwrecks. Av. da Liberdade, s/n, downtown. Open weekdays from 8 am to 5 pm, and weekends from 3 to 8 pm (☎ 22-2624-1596 or 22-2624-1650).

★**Admiral Paulo Moreira Ocean Studies Institute & Oceanographic Museum**, called IPEAM, is at Praia dos Anjos, with exhibits of live fish and crustaceans and the skeleton of a killer whale. To visit the **Old Lighthouse Ruins** (see *Ruins* below), which is recommended, this is where you buy your ticket. Open Tuesday through Sunday 8 am to 5 pm (☎ 22-2622-1444).

★**Our Lady of the Remedies Church** (Igreja de Nossa Senhora dos Remédios) dates from 1506 and is where the first Catholic mass under a permanent shelter in South America was held. The church is at Praia dos Anjos. Appropriate clothing (no shorts) is required. Inside is an original image of Our Lady of the Remedies in terra cotta from Portugal. Nearby is the **Casa de Piedra**, now private property, a dwelling built about the same time as the church.

Another landmark is the **Obelisk of Amerigo Vespucci** (Obelisco a Américo Vespúcio), built in 1968. The granite pylon with sculpted Maltese cross marks the date of the expedition's landing. Nearby is the well that supplied the village in the 19th century.

Adventures on Land

Scenic Ruins

Arraial do Cabo has interesting 19th-century ruins. They are remote (which is why they became ruins in the first place) but have great views and nice hikes.

The Telegraph Ruins

★★The **Old Lighthouse Ruins** (Ruínas do Farol Velho) date from 1836 when Dom Pedro I decided to build a lighthouse on the highest point of Cabo Frio Island – better known as Lighthouse Island (Ilha do Farol). It is in good condition, but was abandoned because of the difficult access and a newer lighthouse was built on a lower point. Access is only by boat (see *Ocean Excursions*), and once on the island you have to hike two hours at a moderate pace up a fairly steep incline. Bring mosquito repellent. The 148-ft (45-m) staircase carved in marble shows how ambitious this project was for the period. If you don't want to hike, you can still enjoy the beaches and dunes on the deserted island and you will want to cool off with a refreshing swim after the hike.

The **Telegraph Ruins** (Ruínas do Telégrafo) has a great view of the region from one of the highest points in the city on top of the **Pontal do Atalaia** hill. The ruined telegraph station was built in the 1800s. It's located 1.2 miles (two km) from the bus station, so you can get there by car, bicycle, or on foot (the hike is steep). Sunset is a good time to go (see *Lookout Points*, below). From downtown, just follow the signs to Pontal do Atalaia.

Nature Trails & Lookout Points

The **Center for Environmental Studies and Projects** (**CENTRAB**) provides guided hikes and trails through the dunes, salt pits, and promontories of the region. Check there for the many options at Rua Santa Cruz, 12 at Praia dos Anjos (☎ 22-2622-2021).

Adventures on Water

★Beaches

Praia do Pontal

Praia do Pontal is right after you enter the city gate, 15 or 20 minutes by car from downtown. In off-season it is a secluded beach. The surf is calm, and sometimes algae turns the water green, but it is safe to swim. Fishermen's huts and boats lend a rustic atmosphere. Kayaks launch here for Pontal Island, facing the beach. **Prainha** is to the left as you descend into the city from Cabo Frio. The water is calm, clear and shallow. On either side are mountains: the **Morro do Miranda** and **Morro do Forno**. This beach is popular for skin-diving and good for windsurfing. Kiosks sell snacks and drinks. A tiny beach, **Praia da Graçinha**, appears in low tide on the right side. **Prainhas do Pontal do Atalaia** are two tiny coves sheltered by rocks. You need to go on foot over the Pontal do Atalaia or by boat (see *Ocean Excursions*, below). The water is clear with white sands that resemble a patch of the Caribbean. In front is Lighthouse Island. The trail is a bit steep, but the beach is worth visiting.

Praia Brava is on the **Pontal do Atalaia**, sheltered by rock walls. To get there you need to hike over the hill. The surf is rough here (though you can still take a dip on some days), and it's mainly a surfing beach. The view is great but be careful on the precarious descent! **Praia Grande**

has light, powdery dunes for 25 miles (40 km) on your right coming into the city from Rio de Janeiro. The water is very cold – on average about 64.4°F (18°C), but as low as 46.4°F (8°C) on certain days due to the resurgence phenomenon, which brings super-chilled waters from the Falkland Islands. This is a surfing and fishing beach, but surfing is allowed only when the banners are up. There are generally crowds of young people playing volleyball or soccer, interspersed with fishermen and dune buggies roaring along stretches of isolated beach. **Praia Massambaba** and **Praia Figueira** are linked, a half-hour from **Arraial do Cabo** by car toward Rio de Janeiro (near the Highway Patrol station), at the city limits. These beaches are popular with the surfing crowd and you can also visit the famous lakes. **Praia dos Anjos** is the centrally located port but not good to swim unless you like dodging propeller blades. It's also polluted. The area is well lit at night and a popular place for beach soccer. On the left are the docks, and to the right is the **IPEAM** oceanographic institute and the **Morro Pontal de Atalaia**.

Praia do Forno is a sheltered cove 10 minutes from Praia dos Anjos. Getting there over the hill is a bit of a hike (unless you arrive by boat, see *Ocean Excursions*). The water is greener and warmer than the other beaches of the region – about 79°F (26°C) on average – with less resurgence. Here there is snorkeling with plenty of corals and rock formations, but watch out for jet skis! Up on the rocks are the ruins of the Marisco Fortress (totally dismantled), which today is used to farm oysters and other shellfish. They can be purchased at the site.

★★Boat Excursions

Boat excursions are cheap and fun. The main point of departure is **Praia dos Anjos**. Tour boats have guides and on-board refreshments – arrange these at the docks or at hotels and shops around the city. One option you have here is an "aqua taxi" that takes you to beaches impossible to reach any other way, and they pick you up later.

Typically, excursions take up to four hours, stopping along the way to let passengers take a dip and to visit the remote beaches. Fresh fruits, cookies and soft drinks are usually provided, but bring a towel, sun block, cap and dark glasses to protect from the glare. As you approach the parking lot near the docks, men will pounce on you waving tickets. It's not a rip off, but it's better to walk out to the pier and take a look before you decide. There is a wide range of quality – insist on a radio and life preservers, as there have been accidents here.

The most recommended destination is **Lighthouse Island** (Ilha de Farol), where there are ruins (see above). To go you need to get a permit to visit the island at the **Admiral Paulo Moreira Ocean Studies Institute**, currently about a dollar. The island has great beaches and the vegetation is very well preserved. Excursions also stop at the **Blue Grotto**, a deep ocean cave that gets its name from the colorful effect of sunlight as it enters.

Another popular destination is **Gruta do Oratorio**, an ocean cavern with a mystical image thought to resemble a saint, actually a naturally occurring rock formation inside the grotto.

Split Rock of Our Lady

Also recommended is the trip to the **Split Rock of "Our Lady"** (Fenda de Nossa Senhora), a deep crack between two high rock formations. The rock got its name from a fisherman who claimed to have found a saint's image at the site, which was removed but later stolen from Nossa Senhora de Assunção Church, in Cabo Frio. Access is only by boat.

Zarony Mares offers excursions to isolated beaches, the Blue Grotto, Lighthouse Island, and other sites. Masks and snorkels available, bathroom on board. The boat leaves at 10 am from Praia dos Anjos. The ***Pelicano II*** goes to the beaches, Blue Grotto and other main sites. If you find a beach you like, you have the option to stay and the boat will pick you up on the way back (☎ 22-2622-4747 or 22-9218-8471). **Blue Grotto Boat Excursions** (Gruta Azul Passeios de Barco) leave at 9:30 am with a ride of about 40 minutes to the island. Their office is at Praia Grande, Avenida Getulio Vargas, 82 (☎ 22-2622-2554).

★★Diving

Arraial do Cabo is one of the better diving spots in Brazil because of the resurgence phenomenon. Jacques Cousteau loved it here, but irresponsible tourism has damaged a lot of the corals, and there is urban debris from runoff. It is, however, one of the few places left in Brazil where there are natural sea horse habitats.

There is generally good sea life and an interesting sea floor, with a range of conditions and well-equipped dive operators. There are also a number of shipwrecks, deep dives and caverns for advanced divers. As a rule you can have a rewarding dive on any given day, regardless of the wind and visibility conditions, with over 80 different dive sites. However, conditions tend to vary from day to day. And it can get crowded during the busy season.

Visibility is better here than in Búzios (around 50 feet on average), but is poor in May. Also it is colder, with water temperatures of 59-68°F (15-20°C).

Some dive sites have been shut down by the Wildlife Protection Agency (Ibama), because of damage to corals, and night diving is prohibited. Boats depart from the docks at **Praia dos Anjos**. On average, recent prices were about $10 for the boat, and $5 per piece of equipment rented, including tanks, so it's a pretty good deal. A night dive with one tank costs $20. Snorkelers pay $7.

There are only three recommended dive operators among the many in town:

- **Deep Trip** has two boats equipped with GPS, first aid, oxygen and radio and is PADI certified. Avenida Getulio Vargas, 93 Praia Grande (☎ 22-2622-1800 or 21-8166-9136).
- **Arraial Sub** has two boats equipped with radio, rescue equipment, oxygen and adaptations for disabled divers, and is PADI certified. Rua D. Pedro I, 59 Centro (☎ 22-2622-1945).
- **Sand'Mar Nitrox** has one boat equipped with radio and first aid equipment and is PDIC certified. Avenida Getúlio Vargas, 213-A, in Canaã (☎ 22-2622-5703).

Where to Stay

Lodging is abundant, mostly not luxurious, but comfortable. Always book in advance during the busy season but normally you can get a discount if you ask.

Genesis Tennis Beach Hotel ($$) is comfortable with tennis and access to the beach. Avenida Litoranea, 22, Praia Grande (☎ 24-2622-2278).

Also on Praia Grande is **Hotel Pousada Caminho do Sol** ($$) on a hill overlooking the water, with clean, air-conditioned suites (some with ceiling fans). Rua do Sol, 50 (☎ 22-2622-1347).

Estalagem do Porto ($) is a small, pleasant hotel with air-conditioning or ceiling fans. Outside there is a patio bar and restaurant, with a cyber café for guests. Praia dos Anjos, on Rua Santa Cruz, 12 (☎ 22-2622-2892 or 2622-2021).

Hotel Praia dos Anjos ($), close to the docks and restaurants, has clean suites on three floors with air-conditioning or ceiling fans. Some have a terrace with an ocean or mountain view. There is a discount for divers

Hotel Praia dos Anjos

and very affordable rates off-season. Avenida Roberto Silveira, 10 Praia dos Anjos (☎ 22-2622-1378).

Casa das Pedras ($$) is one of the best-known *pousadas* in town with individual bungalos (some with ocean views) on Pontal de Atalaia. Each has a kitchenette, but breakfast is not included. Guests can rent laser-class sailboats, kayaks, and snorkeling gear. Ask about the sea turtle that lives there. Book in advance (☎ 21-2274-1202).

Pousada Enseada das Orcas ($) is a comfortable *pousada* on Rua Manoel Duarte, 38, within walking distance of Praia dos Anjos. Rooms have air-conditioning or a ceiling fan, TV, and safe parking. There is a special discount for divers, and fresh water to hose down your gear (☎ 22-622-1737).

Recanto dos Querubins

Pousada Recanto dos Querubins ($) is fairly comfortable, with a pool and safe parking. All rooms have air-conditioning and television. Rua Nilo Peçanha, 30 (☎ 22-2622-2480, www.querubinstur.com.br).

Pousada dos Atobas ($) looks like a small fortress from the outside. The rooms themselves are not as striking, but are quite comfortable, with bay windows and air-conditioning. Stay here and you can get a discount through local dive operators. Prainha, on Jose Pinto Macedo, 270 (☎ 22-2622-2461).

Camping

The Brazil Camping Club has space to pitch a tent, with about 70 campsites. The campsite is called **CCB-RJ-05**, on Avenida a Liberdade, close to Praia dos Anjos and about a mile from downtown (☎ 22-2622-1023).

Where to Eat

The best bet here is fresh fish, though there are other options. The service tends to be slow. Consider dining in nearby Búzios, where prices are higher, but there is a better selection.

Della Collina Pizzaria Italiana ($) serves pizza at Rua José Pinto de Macedo 270, shop 7, Prainha (☎ 22-2622-3948).

Mr. Pizza ($) serves pizza at Praça do Cova, 7, Praia dos Anjos (☎ 22-2622-1017).

Picanha na Brasa ($-$$) has grilled meats. Rua Nereu Ramos, 11 in Praia Grande (☎ 22-2622-2614).

Todos os Prazeres ($$) serves great seafood. Recanto da Prainha, 5 (☎ 24-2622-2365).

Viagem dos Sabores, ($$) offers Mediterranian cuisine. Rua Santa Cruz, 12, Praia dos Anjos, Annex (☎ 22-2622-2892).

Restaurante Hissao, ($$) serves decent pan-Asian food. Rua José Pinto de Macedo, 355, Prainha (☎ 24-2622-5124).

O Escondidinho, ($$$) specializes in *bacalhau.* Rua Pastor Paulo Manhard, 9, Praia Grande. (☎ 22-9839-5184).

Cabo Frio

Cabo Frio is the poor sister of the Sun Coast and is Brazil's seventh-oldest city. The Portuguese began extracting Brazil wood here in 1511, but the French incited the local Tamoios to destroy their outpost. After a hundred years of fighting, the Governor of Rio found out the French were preparing to load five great ships in Cabo Frio, and he quickly sent his Navy up the coast to surprise them. The French caught wind of the plot and fled, leaving the victorious armies, who built Santo Inácio Fortress in 1615, founding the city Santa Helena do Cabo Frio. Soon another fortress called São Mateus, was built over the fortifications the French had abandoned. Now invincible, the colony slowly turned into a fishing village after the forests disappeared in the mid 18th century. This was also one of the main ports where slaves were delivered to South America.

In 1824 Emperor Dom Pedro I began producing salt, which was an important activity until the 1950s, when Cabo Frio discovered its tourism potential. You can enjoy great beaches here and white sand dunes, windmills, fishing, a bustling nightlife, plenty of local sights, plus good scuba diving. Still, the city of 120,000 people is unappealing compared to its neighbors, Búzios and Arraial do Cabo. Basically, a provincial party town, it is neither chic nor charming, but this tropical jewel in the rough is worth a stop to check it out at least for a day.

Getting Around

Cabo Frio is not hard to navigate, as the city is on an isthmus, bounded on the north and east by the Itajurú Channel and on the south by the Atlantic Ocean. During the day people go to the beaches, and at night things migrate toward the renovated channel boardwalk, where there are restaurants and open-air stalls selling knick-knacks, arts and crafts.

Information and maps are available at the **Secretary of Tourism**, at Praça Américo Vespúcio in the Algodoal neighborhood (☎ 22-2647-1689 or 2647-6227 or 0800-260004). There is also a map of the city at the Alexis Novellino Bus Station on Avenida Júlia Kubitschek (☎ 22-2645-6611 or 2643-1521 or 2653-3778), about 1.2 miles/two km from the center of town. It helps to have a car in Cabo Frio, but parking can be a hassle, especially around the beaches where there are *flanelinhas* who hit you up for a few reais to park. If you park near the kiosks (get there early) the kiosk owners will keep an eye on things for you.

Cabo Frio is a bigger city than its neighbors and you need to be more careful at night. Avoid isolated areas and stay with the crowds where it is well lit, especially along the renovated channel district. **Feliciano Sodré Bridge** crosses the **Itajurú Channel** – cross it to go shopping for beach clothes in Gamboa. The **Itajurú Channel** is navigable and connects the Atlantic Ocean with **Araruama Lake**. This is a romantic boardwalk for a stroll at sunset, and there are boats for excursions all along the channel. There are taxis at Largo Santo Antônio (no number) downtown (☎ 22-2643-0174), at the Cabo Frio Bus Station on Avenida Júlia Kubitschek (no number) Shop 32 (☎ 22-2643-2291), or the airport (☎ 22-2644-5058).

Sightseeing

Sao Mateus Fortress

São Mateus Fortress was built in 1650 to protect the Portuguese colony in Rio de Janeiro. Its cannon defended the channel and were part of a relay system along the coast to warn when enemies were approaching. Open from 10 am to 4 pm Tuesday to Sunday, on the left hand side of São Mateus Beach.

Not much remains of the **Santo Inacio Fortress**, built in the early 1600s. The ruins can be seen from Praia do Forte. **Sambuqui of the Fort**, on the dunes up above, was a prehistoric dwelling where shaped quartz, shells and fish bones have been found. It's on southern tip of the Itaiurú Channel at the southern end of Praia do Forte.

The **Itajurú Fountain Park** was vital to the original colony as it supplied fresh water during the period of the mid-1800s. The French and the indigenous groups here probably used it before then. The fountain has been restored and the surrounding area turned into a park, with some Brazil wood trees. Open 8 am to 5 pm. Avenida Júlia Kubitscheck, downtown.

Museums

The **Sea Museum** has more than a dozen salt and fresh water aquariums with fish from Cabo Frio and other parts of Brazil. Avenida Barão do Rio Branco, casa 94, downtown.

The **Maritime History Museum** displays items excavated from shipwrecks, miniatures of ships, and photographs that are part of Cabo Frio's long nautical past. Rua Marechal Floriano, 131, in the São Bento neighborhood, downtown.

Historic Churches

Built in 1660, the **Nossa Senhora da Assunção Church** is in front of the Porto Rocha plaza, preserving the Colonial Portuguese style. The main altar holds a saint's image carved from wood and the sanctuary has a historic chapel in honor of Nossa Senhora da Conceição.

The **Nossa Senhora dos Anjos Convent** dates from 1686, a landmark of Colonial architecture from the period. Next door is a Franciscan cemetery, and on top of the Hill there is the **Nossa Senhora da Guia Chapel**. The Chapel, from 1740, was restored in 1982 and has been declared a historic landmark. In front of the church there is a cross that dates from the 16th century. There is also a religious and traditional art museum at this site. To the right of the Chapel is an indigenous polisher, a large rectangular stone with numerous lines carved on top that was most likely used by the natives to polish stone axes.

Nossa Senhora dos Anjos Convent

THE LEGEND OF SUMÉ

When the Portuguese arrived they learned from the indigenous Tupis of Cabo Frio the legend of Sumé. This mythic figure was said to have taught the people how to farm. Intrigued by the story, the Portuguese explorers followed the locals into the forest, where they discovered the supposed marks of "Sumé's club." This was a rectangular stone covered with grooves, like those of the indigenous polisher at the Nossa Senhora da Guia Chapel. The legend suggests that the stones, which were used to manufacture tools such as axes, predated the Tupis, who arrived about 200 years before the Portuguese, and that the region was the site of even older indigenous cultures. Today there are still some of these strange stones hidden in the forest. Even more intriguing, however, is the idea that Sumé could have been one of the Phoenician explorers thought to have arrived in Brazil long before Europeans. The apparent face and Phoenician script carved into Gávea Rock in the Tijuca National Forest in Rio de Janeiro, where some think there is a tomb, is thought to support this. There is other evidence throughout Brazil for this idea, even in the far-away Amazon.

Adventures on the Water

★Beaches

Praia da Barra ou do Forte starts at the mouth of the Itajurú Channel, where it is called Praia do Forte, and continues all the way to Arraial do Cabo. The water is amazingly blue and transparent and fairly warm. Close to the canal you can see the historic fortresses built here centuries ago. There are kiosks that sell seafood, sandwiches and drinks. The water is calm and at times as clear as glass.

Walking away from the fort, you will find sand dunes farther down the beach. This part of the beach is called **Praia das Dunas**. The surf is heavy here and very popular with surfers, but you should be careful because of the rip tides. The dunes are great to visit and usually there are people here "surfing" the dunes on pieces of cardboard, plastic or other improvised sled. Don't bring valuables, though, as there have been robberies in the past. You can also get here by car from the neighborhood called Braga.

Farther on is **Praia do Foguete**, where there are surfing championships and shore fishing, as well as one of the best locations for kitesurfing. Access to Foguete is also via the Cabo Frio-Arraial do Cabo Highway if you don't want to walk the whole way.

Praia das Conchas is the main beach in Cabo Frio and the most popular with tourists. Kiosks sell food and drinks. The long beach is curved like a shell ("concha" means shell). On the right is Ponta do Arpoador and to the left dunes and Morro do Vigia, which offers a nice view. Behind the beach on the hillsides are scrublands with cactus and dunes. The beach tends to fill up with wandering vendors of all kinds. Avoid eating shrimp, as it may have been in the sun a long time. The fish served by the kiosks is fresh, though. To get there, cross the Itajurú Channel over the bridge and head through Gamboa and Ogiva, until you get to Largo dos Pescadores in the Peró neighborhood. Turn right on Rua Piloto until you reach the beach.

On the other side of the **Praia das Conchas**, toward **Praia do Peró**, there is a bunjee-jumping tower, but there are always long lines. For kids, there is a place to ride a gentle old mare for a few *reias*.

★Diving

Cabo Frio means "Cold Cape" for good reason – the water is very cold due to the Arctic resurgence currents that reach this small section of the coast from far to the south in the Falkland Islands. As a result there is a lot of marine life. Water temperatures from March through October are between about 63-72°F (17-22°C) and the rest of the year they drop to around 50-59°F (10-15°C), which is very cold compared to the rest of the Southeast Region.

The dive sites are found at a group of seven uninhabited islands. Visibility ranges from 30-60 feet (nine-18 m), but can be highly variable. It is possible to see rays, starfish, barracuda, sea turtles and various kinds of corals with very interesting ledges, passageways and other features, including an artificial reef. Some of these sites have wall dives that go to 120 feet (36.6 m) or more, making the region good for divers of all skill levels. Be careful with the strong currents in some locations, though most of these areas have sheltered or partially sheltered dives for beginners. Two daytime dives are currently about $50, plus equipment at $5 per piece. Night dives are available.

Three operators are recommended here. **Over Sea Dive Center** at Rua José Augusto Saraiva, 02, Ilha da Draga, near the fish market, has their own pier, two boats with safety equipment and radio, and English-speaking guides (☎ 22-2647-5375).

CMAS- and NAUI-certified **Tridente** is at Rua Maestro Clodomiro Guimarães de Oliveira, 362, Praça da Bandeira in Passagem. Oxygen and radio on board. (☎ 22-9971-5799, Frederico, 22-9971-5798, Ana Paula, or 22-7834-0190, office).

PADI- and PDIC-certified **Cabo Frio Sub** is at Rua Major Belegard, 419, shop 1, downtown, with a 36-foot and 42-foot trawler adapted for diving. Boats leave from the Irajuru Channel Tourist Terminal (☎ 22-2643-1475).

★★Sport Fishing

Cabo Frio is well known for South American sport fishing but there are not a lot of professional services geared to the sport. A record blue marlin was caught here in recent years, and there are still groupers, barracudas, anchovies and other tasty fish to be had in these choppy seas. The best season is in the Brazilian summer but you can fish year-round from the beach. The most popular shore fishing locations are Ilha dos Pargos, Ilha Dois Irmãos, Ilha Papagaios and Ilha Comprida.

Every year in January or February there is the **Cabo Frio Marlin Invitational championship** (contact the International Game Fish Association in Ft. Lauderdale, FL for details). Once, an amazing 1,183-pounder was brought up here. For bill fishing, contact the sport fishing charters listed in the Rio de Janeiro chapter. You can also try the **Yacht Club of Rio de Janeiro** (www.icrj.com.br, pesca@icrj.com.br), which operates a marina in Cabo Frio, and ask them for help with arranging a charter.

Kitesurfing

You can practice kitesurfing at "kite park" on Praia do Foguete, facing the Hookipa Gardens Pousada, or at the Arauama lake nearby. Winds are strong most days. You can rent equipment or take a class at the pousada, near Posto 5 on Estrada de Arraial do Cabo (☎ 22-2648-1661) or at Pousada Lírios do Mar on Rua dos Atobás 22, Praia do Foguete (☎ 22-2644-1618).

Adventures on Land

Dunes

Cabo Frio's soft white sand dunes shining in the sun are a definite attraction. See *Beaches* for how to get here. Close to the Praia do Forte, they are covered with cactus and scrub vegetation. The nicest dunes are on the highway to Arraial do Cabo, where you can watch the sunset. There is another group of yellowish dunes in Peró near the beach. On any of them you can practice dune sledding on a piece of cardboard. The dunes migrate in the wind and even swallow up residences from time to time. A word of caution: robberies have been reported in isolated areas of the dunes so exercise caution and don't take anything expensive. Stay where the locals go during the day and you should have nothing to worry about.

Where to Stay

Hotels & Pousadas

Malibu Palace Hotel ($$$) is a comfortable place in front of Praia do Forte on Avenida do Contorno, 900, at Praia do Forte (☎ 22-2643-1955 or 22-2645-5131).

Spa e Pousada das Conchas ($$) is a rustic pousada with spa services on Rua Bijupirá, 30 Ogiva (☎ 22-2643-1868).

Hotel Acapulco ($$) is a reasonably comfortable hotel facing the beach near the dunes on Rua João Antônio Rocha, 373 Praia das Dunas (☎ 22-2647-1212).

Hookipa Gardens Résidence ($$), on Praia do Foguete (1½ miles from downtown Cabo Frio), offers options such as diving, kitesurfing, and fishing. It is on Estrada de Arraial do Cabo (Posto 5) Praia do Foguete (☎ 22-2648-1661).

Hotel Acapulco

Camping

You can pitch a tent for little money at some of the nearby campgrounds. Following are some options: **Bosque Clube** on Estrada dos Passageiros, 600 in Porto do Carro (☎ 22-2645-2061). **Cabo Frio I CCB**, Estrada dos Passageiros, 700 in Porto do Carro (☎ 22-2643-3124). **Ar Livre Mini Camping**, Estrada dos Passageiros, 502 in Porto do Carro (☎ 22-2643-4611). **Camping do Braga**, Rua General Alfredo Bruno Martins, 74, in Braga (☎ 22-2647-2880).

Where to Eat

Churrascaria Encantado ($$) serves grilled meats in *rodízio* style (all-you-can-eat) at Praça da Bandeira, 65 Passagem (☎ 22-2645-5069).

Cabo Grill ($) is a self-service (plate by weight) buffet with grilled meats, seafood, pasta and salads at Rua Raul Veiga 554 in the Centro (☎ 22-2647-3708).

Da Ponte ($$) is a fish market that also prepares fresh fish and crustaceans at Ilha da Draga, 05 (☎ 22-2647-5341)

What to Buy

Cabo Frio is famous for its bikini shops. Shopping Gamboa, in the area that was once known as Bikini Street, has dozens of stores offering beachware in all styles and prices, with others in the nearby area. It is on the other side of the canal from downtown, accessible by the **Feliciano Sodré Bridge** (see *Sightseeing*), with other shops nearby.

Near the bridge and all along the channel boardwalk at night, street stalls open up and sell locally produced arts and crafts.

The Green Coast

Angra dos Reis, Ilha Grande e Paraty

- Explore pirate hideaways amid hundreds of desert islands
- Great diving opportunities with caverns and shipwrecks
- Visit Paraty, enchanting gateway to the historic gold route

Ilha Grande

The Green Coast is a resort area just hours from Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. Here, amid the many unspoiled beaches, mountains and waterfalls, you can find lush island hideaways once used by pirates. The region takes its name from the striking color of the Ilha Grande Bay, considered one of the most beautiful coastlines in Brazil. The main destinations are **Angra dos Reis**, **Paraty** and the mostly uninhabited island of **Ilha Grande**. There are in fact 365 islands, one for every day of the year, as the locals like to say. To make the most of your trip you should visit them, at least on a day cruise. Angra is the most crowded and industrialized city, without a lot of natural beauty, but there are some very good resorts at isolated beaches, scuba diving and scenic boat trips. This is also the main point of departure to the islands. The most famous of those is Ilha Grande, a National Park with rustic settlements where you can also go hiking, sailing or diving. Paraty is the most charming locale, a quaint historic city considered a Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO, with cobbled streets and first-rate hospitality. The beaches of the region tend to be nicer the farther you go from the cities. Due to its location close to the largest cities of the Southern Region, the Green Coast tends to get crowded during the Brazilian summer and holidays. If you explore a bit, you can find amazing destinations amid the seemingly endless bays, mangrove stands, palm-lined beaches, and rocky coasts around each bend in the coastline.

When to Go

The climate here is hot and humid, without much of a dry season, and an annual average temperature around 77°F (35°C). October through March is the hottest and rainiest period, and the best time to go is from around February to June or August to September (the "off-season"), when the prices are lower and there are fewer crowds. Since most of what there is to do is outdoors, rain can interfere with your trip – if you can read a little Portuguese, you might check the government Internet site www.inmet.gov.br for Costa Verde to get a forecast.

How to Get Here

You can **drive** from Rio or São Paulo. From Rio take the Rio-Santos Highway (BR-101) toward Itacuruçá, Mangarativa, and Angra dos Reis for 45 miles/75 km. Paraty is another 60 miles/100 km after Angra.

From São Paulo take the Marginal Tietê in the northeast section of the city onto State Highway SP-070 (Rodovia Ayrton Senna/Carvalho Pinto) for 8.4 miles/14 km. Next take BR-116, the Via Dutra Highway, until Barra Mansa, then take State Highway RJ-155 toward Lídice, and continue for about 48 miles/80 km to join with BR-101. From there it's nine miles/15 km to Angra (toward Angra and Rio) and 51 miles/85 km to Paraty (toward Santos and São Paulo).

If you are not comfortable driving, it is easy to get there by **bus** – there are several comfortable buses each day to Angra and Paraty from Rio or São Paulo. The trip takes only a few hours from either city. However, once you are here (except Ilha Grande) it does help to have a car to get around.

From Rio, the **Viação Costa Verde** bus line is good (☎ 21-2233-3809 or 21-2516-2437 in Rio, 24-3365-0181 in Angra, 24-3371-1177 or 24-3371-1326 in Paraty).

From São Paulo, the **Viação Reunidas Paulista** is good (☎ 11-6221-8801 or 0800-177-200 or 0800-709-9020 in São Paulo, 24-3365-1280 or 24-3365-0600 in Angra, or 24-3371-1196 or 24-3371-2090 in Paraty).

The bus station in Angra (☎ 24-3365-0181) is at Praia da Chácara (near Pirata's Mall) about 1½ miles/2½ km from the Centro. The bus station in Paraty (☎ 24-3371-1177 or 24-3371-1171) is at Rua Jango de Pádua), three blocks from the Old Town district.

You can also get to the Green Coast by **boat** if you charter a sailboat from Rio, but this can be a little expensive, even though it gives you a customized trip along the coast (see *Boat Excursions* in the Rio chapter).

The region is so close that air travel is not needed, but there is a small airport in Angra with flights from Rio or São Paulo on **Team** (☎ 24-3365-5334 or 21-2533-6565).

Angra dos Reis

Angra dos Reis means "Little Harbor of the Kings," a name given by the Portuguese explorers who arrived here in 1502 during the king's day festival. They soon realized this little harbor is in fact part of a gigantic bay that would prove vital to European colonization in the years ahead.

In 1559, the first European settlement got underway in Vila Velha, facing Ilha da Gipóia. In 1624, the settlement migrated closer to the Carmo Convent mission and became Angra dos Reis. The colonists suffered constantly from raids by pirates and the hostile natives (the Tupinambá and Goiana) and the unpredictable storms that still sweep away entire beaches. Sugar began to be planted in the 17th century and this soon turned the Green Coast into a major producer of the sugar and cachaça that the region is famous for today. When gold was discovered in the 18th century, the region became a wealthy port and continued to expand with the coffee boom. This period left behind many historic warehouses, trading houses, churches and mansions. By the mid-1800s, Emperor Dom Pedro II built railroads to Rio de Janeiro and, as the port was no longer needed, Angra fell into decline. Today Angra is a mostly industrial town with Brazil's only nuclear power plant, which supplies the huge urban population of Rio and São Paulo. If you stay, you should consider some of the excellent resorts. Scuba diving is the main attraction.

Festivals & Events

January is the main festival month, with the biggest nautical event of the year – the **New Years Maritime Procession** (Procissão Marítima de Ano Novo) when hundreds of yachts, schooners, motorboats, and sailboats take part to celebrate the New Year.

On January 6, the city celebrates its **birthday** with a three-day festival of musical shows, folkloric presentations and sporting events.

Getting Around

Though the city is not very appealing, the surrounding area is an ecological paradise where you should plan to spend your time. A trip to the city is useful to find tour guides and agencies, boat operators, and banking services. There are also some minor historic sights.

Most hotels will provide transport from Rio, the airport or bus station by prior arrangement (some charge for this service).

To get around, **taxis** are recommended – there is a stand at the bus station, or call ☎ 24-3365-3393 or 24-3365-5161.

If you want to rent a car, there is **Acesse Rent a Car** on Rua Prof Toscano de Brito, 69 in the Balneário neighborhood (☎ 24-3365-2024 or

24-9979-0971), or **Eval Rent a Car** on Avenida Francisco Guedes da Silva, 1266 in Parque Perequê (☎ 24-3362-3017).

For currency exchange, there is an exchange bureau **Agência de Câmbio Cambi Sul** on Travessa Santa Luzia, 43 in the Centro (☎ 24-3365-3767)

Major credit cards are accepted at many establishments in Angra.

For More Information

Near the historic district you will be approached by locals offering guide services. Avoid them and drop by the helpful **Tourist Information Center**, on Avenida Ayrton Senna da Silva, 580, near Praia do Anil, open daily from 8 am to 8 pm and to 10 pm in the summer (☎ 24-3367-7826 or 24-3367-7855), or at Avenida Júlio Maria, 10, downtown, in front of Fisherman Wharf, from 8 am to 7 pm (☎ 24-3365-5186 or 24-3365-1175). Also at the Bus Terminal, Av. Jair Toscano de Brito (no number), in Parque das Palmeiras, from 8 am to 6 pm (☎ 24-3365-5138 or 24-3365-2041).

For information about the Old Town district call ☎ 24-3369-7718, from 8 am to 6 pm.

Sightseeing

You can walk around the Old Town district if you are waiting for a boat – get maps at the Tourist Information Center. There are some historic churches here and a cross monument in the center of town donated in 1758 by Emperor Dom José I of Portugal.

You might also want to visit the **Mambucaba Historic Villa**, on BR-101 at Km 528 (in the direction of Santos). The villa, with its gorgeous beach, dates from the 19th century and over the years served as a slave market, coffee trading center and *cachaça* production area. Today, there still remain a few buildings and the **Church of Our Lady of the Rosario** (Igreja N. S. do Rosário) built in 1834.

Adventures on the Water

★Scuba Diving

Angra is a good alternative to diving in Rio. Sometimes called the "Pearl of the Green Coast," Angra has decent visibility at around 50 feet (15 m), with warm water about 72°F (22°C). There are more than 50 dive points, including islands, ledges and shipwrecks with a good population of sea life. The sea floor is mostly rocky or sandy, spotted here and there with coral reef. There are lots of sheltered locations and you can dive here pretty much year-round, even in the rain, but the best visibility is from November to May.

Keep in mind that this can be a heavily traveled region so always use caution when surfacing.

One of the best parts of diving here is that the boat trips out to the sites will take you near the scenic isles. After your dive you will usually have a chance to relax in the sun on the very same beaches where pirates hung out hundreds of years ago.

In Angra you can count on generally high-quality services and equipment rentals, though during the holidays and on summer weekends it can be a little crowded. A typical two-tank dive with boat costs $35-40 plus about $7 per piece of equipment at most outfitters.

The dives on the outside of the bay tend to be deeper, colder, and have poor visibility, but they can be interesting at certain times of the year.

For dive operators the **Aquamaster Resort Facility** is at Estrada Vereador Benedito Adelino, 100 at the Praia da Enseada, and is PADI/NAUI/PDIC/DAN-certified (☎ 24-3365-2416 or 24-3361-2484). **Projeto Mergulhar – Aquamar** is at Estrada Ponta Leste 7346, Condomínio Biscaia, casa 6. They operate year-round and are PDIC-certified (☎ 24-3361-3228, 24-7560, or in Rio de Janeiro ☎ 21-2505-9022).

Rafting

Rafting is very popular on the Mambucaba River, with a moderately difficult journey taking about 1½ hours. The entire trip, with transport and a sandwich, currently costs about $40 per person, all equipment provided. Contact **Mambo Jungle** (☎ 24-3369-9500).

Where to Stay

The prices here are for high season and drop substantially during the off-months. Check ahead for the best prices. Normally, there is a 10% service charge and 5% room tax. Reservations are advised.

Angra Inn

Angra Inn ($$$) is a comfortable hotel with a marina and excellent infrastructure for leisure and nautical sports, with adapted accommodations for the disabled. Estrada do Contorno, 2629 in Praia Grande (☎ 24-3377-1717).

Hotel do Frade e Golf Resort ($$$$) is on BR 101, Km 513, at Praia do Frade. It is a luxury resort with golf course, beach, waterfall, marina, and dive operator. It's also a meeting point for young people taking boats to parties on the islands in summer (☎ 24-3369-9500, 24-3369-2254 or toll free 0800-8819500).

Blue True Park ($$$$$) is a luxury hotel on Estrada Vereador Benedito Adelino, 8413, at Fazenda Tanguá, with sports and leisure activities, adapted for the disabled. Access is via the Estrada do Contorno (☎ 24-3379-2800 or 24-3379-2828 or toll free 0800-150-500).

Pestana Angra Beach Bungalows ($$$$$) is a luxury option at Estrada Vereador Benedito Adelino, 3700, in Retiro, with leisure activities, nautical sports and diving (☎ 24-3365-2005, 24-3365-1919 or toll free 0800-266-332).

Pestana Angra Beach Bungalows

Club Med Rio das Pedras ($$$$), on BR 101 at the 445.5 Km marker in Mangaratiba, is a luxury resort in Mangaratiba, northeast of Angra and only 75 miles/120 km southwest of Rio (☎ 21-2688-9191, 21-2688-3333 or toll free 0800 7073782).

Pousada Canto do Hibisco ($$) is an afforable option on Ilha de Gipóia (Praia do Vitorino). Pleasant lodging with transfers to and from the continent and boat excursions around the islands (☎ 24-3365-5078, 24-3365-2181, or 24-9991-6605).

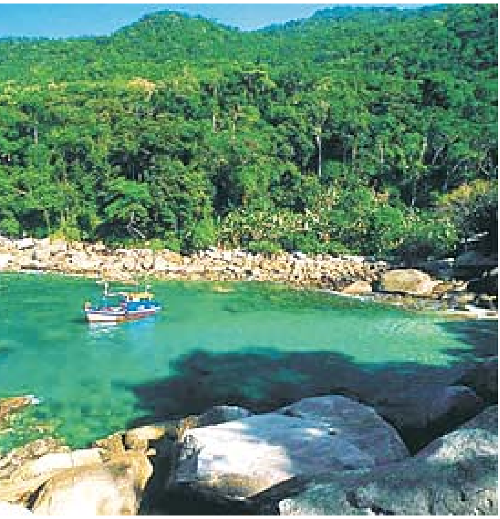
Where to Eat

The **Condomínio Porto Frade** complex is one of the main nightspots and dining areas in Angra with parties during the summer, on the Rio-Santos Highway (BR-101), Km 513. Here you will find some of the region's better restaurants. From here for about $5 you can also catch a boat to ever-changing party locations on the islands.

For an inexpensive lunch downtown, try **Barretos Restaurante** ($) at Rua Coronel Carvalho, 61, with good self-service plate by weight (☎ 24-3365-7197, 24-3365-0677 or 24-9991-6000).

Ilha Grande

Ilha Grande, the largest island in the bay, is one of the best coastal destinations in the Southeast region. There is a great variety of plant and animal life on this 74-square-mile island covered with original Atlantic rainforest, waterfalls and mountains. Most people come for the beaches, as the island is just an hour and a half away by boat from Angra dos Reis. It was first inhabited by Tupinambá indigenous groups, who gave the island its name. They are also the ones who first opened the trails through the forest to isolated coves and beaches. By the 18th



century, Ilha Grande was a haven for Dutch, French and English pirates, who took advantage of the fresh water, fruits and wood here to launch raids on the Portuguese colony at Angra dos Reis. When they were gone, slave traders and smugglers took their place, until finally in 1850 the crown sent warships to control the island and its shipping lanes. Whaling, sugar and coffee then became the main activities, but these dwindled out by the 20th century and the island returned to its tangled, deserted state with a handful of farms and fishing villages. In the 1940s, the island was turned into a penal colony for political dissidents and common criminals. The ruins of two notorious prisons, now deactivated, can be seen as a grim reminder of Brazil's dictatorial past. The island today is a state park and wildlife refuge where you will find stunning views and ecological trails. Unspoiled beaches are interspersed with historical structures and, who knows, perhaps even some buried pirate loot. If you are seeking luxury you won't find it here, but for pure tropical beauty, Ilha Grande is highly recommended.

How to Get Here

Barcas S/A has daily boat departures to and from Vila do Abraão on the island and Angra dos Reis or Mangaratiba (☎ 21-2789-1473, 21-1533-7524, 21-2532-6274 or 24-3789-3195), Monday through Friday 8 am to 6 pm. Schedules change constantly, so check ahead for departure times. The trip currently costs $3.50 on weekends and holidays and about $1.60 on other days. If you are driving from Rio, you are better off taking the boat from Mangaratiba, which is 19 miles (30 km) closer than Angra. From Angra, departures are from the Lapa Docks, taking about 1½ hours to travel 14.3 miles. They leave at 3:30 pm on weekdays (returning at 10 am the following day) or 1:30 pm on weekends and holidays, returning at 10 am the following day. From the docks at downtown Mangaratiba, it takes an hour and 20 minutes to travel the 12 miles, leaving at 8 am Monday through Thursday, 8 am and 10 pm on Friday, and returning to Mangaratiba on weekdays at 5:30 pm, weekends and holidays at 4:30 pm.

Private boats are also available at other times, but they tend to wait for groups to show up. This is a good option but make sure your boat has a radio and life preservers before boarding. The trip should cost no more than around $7 per person.

Some tour agencies and hotels provide transport from the continent – check with them for schedules. Once at the island, you will have to take a boat to reach many of the beaches, which can be hired easily at Vila do Abaão.

If you are staying in a pousada at one of the more remote locations of the island, transfer is generally provided from the Vila at an arranged time. There are no cars, motorcycles or other vehicles on the island except utility and military transport, and you will have to park your car on the mainland at the port (parking costs about $5 per day). From the bus station at Angra or Mangaratiba, just take a taxi to the port for under $10.

Getting Around

Ilha Grande has a small but international population spread out over about 20 different villages. The largest is **Vila do Abraão** and the others, such as tiny **Bananal** and **Araçatiba**, are so small that getting around in them does not require maps.

The Vila, as locals usually call Vila do Abraão, has basic facilities such as guesthouses, bars, restaurants, tour guides, shops, cyber cafés, telephones, and the port itself. There are always out-of-towners having a good time, and the scene is very relaxed. The island is rustic, though, and there are no ATMs, so bring cash with you. Travelers checks and credit cards will probably not be accepted, though in a pinch you might trade currency at the tour agencies, and if you are lucky your hotel might accept dollars.

Serious crime is rare here, but there is a police station near the docks. Following the coastline, the main road leads to various guesthouses, shops, restaurants and tour guide services. At night the Vila turns busy, with groups gathered in bars or playing guitar around the plaza. The Vila is tiny, you won't get lost. The locals are friendly if a bit jaded by the constant tourism and, while not quite at international resort levels, the service here is reasonably good.

For More Information

i Once you arrive, straight ahead of the port is a **Tourist Information Center**, open from 9 am-9 pm every day during high season, and in the mornings and afternoons, except Sunday, during low season. To the left is a plaza with a church where you will find a kiosk for private guides, a few shops, restaurants, and a cyber café. In Angra dos Reis, the **Secretária de Desenvolvimento e Turismo de Angra dos Reis** has additional information about Ilha Grande (see *Angra*, above).

Tour Agencies & Boat Operators

There are several mostly well-run tour agencies and boat operators in the Vila. In general, they offer the best service and you should avoid the touts. For boats, though, renting a fishing boat is a good and cheap way to customize your visit to the nearby beaches.

The **Associação de Barqueiros do Abraão** is a local skipper's association at Rua da Praia (the street on the beach) in the Vila for hiring boats. An all-day trip to the Blue Lagoon costs around $7 per person (☎ 24-3361-5920).

Pousada Água Viva, a guesthouse at Rua da Praia, operates schooner rides to several different destinations (☎ 24-3361-5166 or 24-3361-5156).

Phoenix Turismo, on Rua da Praia, 703 in the Vila, can take you out for trekking, diving, rappel, or mountain bike adventures (☎ 24-3361-5822, 24-9824-9476). They also have an office in Rio de Janeiro that can help arrange your trip (☎ 21-9995-6363).

Sudoeste SW Turismo at Rua da Praia, 647, Vila do Abraão, has English-speaking staff that can take you trekking, arrange travel to the continent, or help you wih kayak and boat trips. Speak with Rodolfo or Cláudia (☎ 24-3361-5516 or 24-3361-5520).

Ilha Grande Adventure at Rua Getúlio Vargas, 35, provides transfer to the mainland, local guides, boat and dive equipment rentals, kayaks and mountain bikes, with English-speaking staff. Credit cards are accepted (☎ 24-3361-5590 or 19-3455-0986).

Adventures on Land

★★ Trails

There are numerous trails through the rainforest, along with local wildlife such as monkeys and tropical birds. While tour guides tend to give you a hard sell at the Vila, some of the shorter trails do not require a guide – get information from the Tourist Information booth. For trekking around the island, there are trails that extend to virtually all the beaches on the island. A round-the-island hike takes from six to 10 days and you will definitely need a guide. As camping is prohibited except on private land, normally you will stay in guesthouses as you trek around. You should bring water, insect repellent, sunscreen and be very careful to find your shelter before dark because there are some steep drops in the forest.

One recommended trail is **Dois Rios**, which starts from Dois Rios beach and continues up a steep hill a little over four miles through the forest. It takes about two hours at a moderate pace. Once you arrive, you will find a very nice beach with calm, clear water and the ruins of a prison deactivated in 1994 that is dark, flooded and covered with graffiti. For lunch, there are some local homes that have been converted into restaurants, which are not expensive. A guide is recommended for this trail because of the distance and should cost under $15 for the full trip. It's likely to take around six hours.

If you want a more strenuous hike, **Pico do Papagaio** is the second-highest mountain on the island at 3,214 feet (980 m), once used as a pirate lookout. The uphill trail is a little over four miles. Along the way there is a stunning panorama of the entire harbor at the Vila and surrounding coastline, and on a clear day you can even see the city of Paraty in the distance.

Another good walk is **Lopes Mendes**, a 3½-mile trail lined with almond trees that takes about two hours, passing along the beaches of Palmas and Mangues, as well as up some steep slopes. To return, the best way is to take a fishing boat back to the Vila for under $5. You can also get to the Lopes Mendes beaches by boat from the Vila if you want.

Rappeling

Sudoeste SW Tour and **Ilha Grande Adventure** can take you rappeling 40 feet (12 m) down the Feiticeira waterfall for about $20. There is a 2½-mile trail to get there from the Vila or you can walk along the coast for 30 minutes to Feiticeira beach.

Adventures on the Water

★★Beaches

Some beaches are remote and you should take a boat there and back. Not all of them have this service readily available though – you may have to walk along a few beaches until you find one with a boat. Check with the Tourist Information Center for details.

Abraão Harbor is at the Vila with a view of the mountains, 14 beaches and five small islands. Avoid swimming at the beach in front of the Vila though, due to boat traffic. You can walk to these beaches without much trouble.

Enseada do Saco do Céu can be reached only by boat, and here you will find some of the best restaurants on the island, with very calm water that reflects the night sky and mangrove stands all along the coast.

Another one of the nicest beaches is **Lopes Mendes** on the south of the island, which extends for two miles, with fine white sand. It's good for

Praia de Lopes Mendes

surfing. To get here, you have to take a boat or trail from the Vila – get directions in the Vila.

The **Green Lagoon** (Lagoa Verde) is shallow, with coral reefs and schools of fish for snorkeling. This is a popular spot for the boat trips from the Vila. To the left is **Praia de Araçatiba**, with soft white sand, calm surf, and restaurants and lodging. The guesthouses here generally have their own transfers directly to and from the mainland.

Enseada Sítio do Forte is another popular spot, with a half-dozen beaches, bars, restaurants and guesthouses overlooking the green water.

★★Diving

With conditions similar to Angra, scuba diving in Ilha Grande Bay is recommended. Water temperatures are fairly warm, ranging from about 66-73°F (19-23°C) on average and visibility is around 50 feet (15 m) on a good day.

The best time to go is from November to May, when the sea is calm, warmer, and there tends to be better visibility. Depth is up to about 80 feet for most dives with a wide range of dive sites for basic or advanced divers. The sea floor is varied, with rocky, sandy or reef formations (some with passageways), and even grottoes and caverns here and there. In the caverns (around Ilha do Jorge Grego, for example) you should watch out for eels.

Anemone

The sea life includes groupers, puffers, rays, seahorses, anemones, octopus and colorful tropical fish, in and around the coral reefs. At some times of year you may even see dolphins. The inner part of the bay has better visibility but the seaward side of the island has more fish and stronger currents.

The region has over a dozen shipwrecks, including European galleons burned by pirates (to this day there are rumors of pirate treasures waiting to be discovered), so you should ask about wreck diving if you are certified.

As with nearby Angra dos Reis, you really have to be careful surfacing because of the constant boat traffic, especially during the Brazilian summer months, on weekends and holidays. For a two-tank daytime dive, boat and equipment rentals, you can expect to pay around $55. A nighttime dive should cost about $10 more.

The operators tend to have good boats and equipment, and are experienced due to the large numbers of divers. Here are some reccomendations.

Ilha Grande Dive, Rua da Praia, 703, in the Vila do Abraão, is a PADI-certified operator with daytime and night departures. They offer optional video service and accept most credit cards. Contact Alexandre Faria (☎ 24-3362-5512, 24-3361-5737 or 21-9692-2381 in Rio de Janeiro).

Ilha Grande Diving & Fishing, Rua da Praia, Travessa Buganville, 5, in the Vila do Abraão, is a PADI-certified operator that accepts Visa (☎ 24-3361-5877, 24-3361-5753 or 24-3361-5546).

Ocean Centro de Mergulho is a PADI-certified operator at Pousada Sankay, on the Enseada do Bananal (VHF Channel 16 by radio), a very interesting place to dive. Their boat has capacity for 30 divers with an inflatable support raft (☎ 24-3365-8496 or in Rio 21-2557-7037).

Angramar, Praia do Bananal, has English-speaking instructors, with daily departures. Contact Kasuo (☎ 24-3365-5769 or 24-7834-8777).

★Boat Trips

Ilha is a haven for sailing and boating in general, with a wide selection of charters and rentals. Most travelers opt for the schooners that take people out for comfortable day-trips to the best sightseeing destinations, with tropical fruits and occasionally drinks on board. These are fun and casual outings where you get a chance to meet other travelers. Normally, you will stop at one or several locations for a swim or sunbathing on a beach. Depending on the destination and the quality, the charge will be $10-50 per person.

The common destinations are Pouso, Blue Lagoon, Green Lagoon, Acaiá Grotto (where there is a an interesting sea cavern), and Saco do Céu, which has a reputation for its romantic starry nights. Trips can take a half-day or full day, so ask.

Since there are so many options, the best advice is to walk down to the port and check out the boats themselves. Avoid the touts everywhere in the Vila. The better boats should have radios and, at the very least, should have life-preservers on board.

Where to Stay

Ilha Grande has a lot of lodging options for all tastes and budgets, but the services are limited by the fact that the island is a national park with prohibitions on urban development. Normally, the guesthouses outside of Vila do Abraão offer transfer to and from the mainland. In the Vila you can also get directions to your guesthouse from the Tourist Information Center at the port. Lodging on the island is simple but of fair to good quality.

To reserve a room (a very good idea on weekends and holidays), you will have to make a non-refundable deposit. Service charges are 10% and room tax 5%, which may be included. Breakfast is generally included. Prices go up during the busy season from December through April. Some of these establishments have telephone numbers in Rio for making arrangements, as noted below.

Sítio do Lobo

★★**Sítio do Lobo** ($$$$) is recommended, at Enseada das Estrelas, where the starry nights reflecting off the water are perfect for couples. Ten-minute transfers to and from Vila do Abraão are provided, with boats available for excursions around the island. American Express and Visa accepted (☎ 24-3361-4438 or 21-2227-4139).

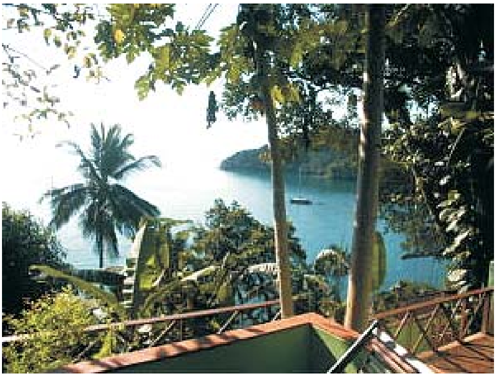
★**Ecodive Resort** ($$$) is a comfortable, remote guesthouse that caters to divers with its own boats at the Enseada do Bananal. No children under 12 years old are allowed. Dinner is included. ecodive@ilhagrandeadventure.com.

★**Recanto de Lourdes** ($$) is a comfortable guesthouse in a quiet nook at Ponta Grossa Sítio Forte (Enseada do Sítio Forte), a nice spot reached only by boat, with transfer provided to and from Angra. They offer discounted diving, boat trips and trail hikes. Dinner included (☎ 24-3365-2194, 24-3377-3143, or 24-9255-7536).

Pousada Água Viva ($$) at Rua da Praia, 26, in Vila do Abraão, is a basic guesthouse facing the beach that offers schooner excursions (☎ 24-3361-5166, 24-3361-5156, or in Rio de Janeiro, 21-2688-4716).

Sagu Mini Resort ($$) is a recommended Zen-style guesthouse at Praia Brava, right after Praia do Canto, in the Vila do Abrão, with transfer provided. Only open during the busy season (☎ 24-3361-7328 or 24-3361-5896).

Dos Meros ($$) is a simple, comfortable and affordable guesthouse at Rua Getulio Vargas, 719, in Vila do Abraão (☎ 24-3361-5221 or 24-3361-5725).



View from Sagu Mini Resort

O Pescador ($$) is a basic pousada at Rua da Praia in the Vila do Abraão facing the ocean (☎ 24-3361-5114 or 24-3361-5711).

Recanto das Estrelas ($$) is a cozy place at Recanto das Jaqueiras in the Vila do Abraão (☎ 21-2268-8707 or 21-9994-0105 in Rio de Janeiro).

Portal dos Borbas ($$) is comfortable and affordable at Rua das Flores, 04 in Vila do Abraão (☎ 21-2437-0722 in Rio de Janeiro or 24-3361-5085, 24-3361-5255).

Ancoradouro ($$) at Rua da Praia, 121-A1, in Vila do Abraão, faces the ocean (☎ 24-3361-5153, 24-3361-5900, or in Rio de Janeiro ☎ 21-2595-0940).

Camping

Camping is prohibited in the park but **Emília Eco-Camping** ($) at Rua Amâncio F. de Souza 18, in Vila do Abraão, will let you pitch a tent for around $5. If you prefer to stay indoors, there are two inexpensive, simple rooms with kitchen, porch, and ceiling fans. (www.emiliaecocamping.com.br (☎ 24-3361-5094 or 24-3361-5410).

Where to Eat

Reis e Magos ($$$$) at Saco do Céu is a good choice for atmosphere and the best for seafood. Access is by boat (☎ 24-9258-2490).

Coqueiro Verde

Coqueiro Verde ($$$), also at Saco do Céu, serves delicious seafood and, if you are staying at the guesthouse here, there is a nice breakfast buffet for $7. The restaurant can be reached by boat. Credit cards not accepted (☎ 24-3361-4394 or 24-9252-0421).

Alecrin Steak House ($$) on Rua da Praia, Travessa Buganville, in Vila do Abraão, serves grilled meats, poultry and fish. Visa and MasterCard accepted. (☎ 24-9962-0990).

Corsário Negro ($$$) at Rua Professora Alice Kury, 90 (Rua da Igreja) in Vila do Abraão, serves pasta, pizza and seafood. Visa accepted (☎ 24-3361-5151).

O Pescador ($$$) at Rua da Praia in Vila do Abrão, serves meat and seafood. Credit cards accepted (☎ 24-3361-5114).

Paraty

Charming and historic Paraty on the southeast coast of the bay is also one of the best destinations in Brazil. The name comes from the Tupi indigenous language meaning "river of fish," because the local waters are where the fish spawn during the winter. The handsome center, with

its centuries-old churches, chapels and mansion, date from the Colonial period. It is said to have a strong Masonic presence (like Ilhéus in Bahia) because of the triangular lines of the streets. Its Masonic mysteries aside, the city is recognized as a Heritage of Humanity site by UNESCO for its beautiful Colonial architecture. The entire historic district with cobbled streets is considered a national landmark. Paraty was founded in 1667 and built with the wealth of sugar cane and *cachaça*, the famous Brazilian sugar-cane drink similar to rum (to this day there are some good ones here). When gold was found in Minas Gerais, then later when the coffee boom came, the port was one of the most active in all of South America. As such, it was a favorite target for pirates, who hid themselves in the sheltered coves around the bay and Ilha Grande. When the gold route was moved overland to Rio de Janeiro at the end of the 19th century, this glorious old city entered into decline. Tourists rediscovered the place in the 1970s, and since then new roads have been built to make it easier to get around. Tourism, liquor, and fish are what Paraty is all about. The mix seems to work, judging by the travelers swilling *cachaça* and feasting on pots of *moquecas* (fish stew) in the tropical setting. Apart from the cultural history, which is the real reason people come here, you can also find trails into the forested mountains, beaches with clear waters and white sands, and dozens of nearby islands where you can go snorkeling or diving. There is also a lively arts scene, including an international literary festival and at night you can enjoy live guitar music at tables set up on the cobblestones.

How to Get Here

The long-distance bus company **Colitur** (☎ 24-3371-1224) goes to and from **Angra dos Reis**, **Paraty-Mirim**, **Penha** and **Laranjeiras**. See the introduction to this chapter for more details on options for buses from Rio and São Paulo.

Getting Around

Cars are not allowed in the cobbled historic district. This area is confusing to everybody as the streets all have two names. It is helpful to have a car to get here because there are nautical and land adventures within a short distance, including the Serra da Bocaína National Park, where you can visit waterfalls, old plantations, and *cachaça* distilleries.

Another option is to drive the old royal gold route, which is a 745-mile road that links Paraty to Diamantina in Minas Gerais state, dating back to the 18th century during the Gold Rush. See the *Minas Gerais* chapter for more details.

At night, the action is in the historic district where you can sample local *cachaças* at the restaurants and bars or browse the many shops and artist studios.

The **bus station** is on Rua Jango de Pádua. There are taxi stands there (☎ 24-3371-3905) or at the Praça do Charafriz near the old marble fountain (☎ 24-3371-1266, ext. 216).

For **currency exchange** you can go to the **Banco do Brasil** at Avenida Roberto Silveira (go in the morning as banks close at 2 pm here and be prepared to wait), ☎ 24-3371-1379. Or change cash at **Atrium**, on Rua do Comercio, 26, ☎ 24-3371-1295.

For More Information

There is a **Tourist Information Center** open from 9 am-9 pm all week at Avenida Roberto Silveira (no number) in the Chácara neighborhood (☎ 24-3371-1266, ext. 218), with a kiosk at the bus station as well where you can get information.

Festivals & Events

Every July there is the **Paraty International Literary Festival** (called Flip) with writers from all over the world who give talks during the day and tie one on at the local bars at night in a very casual atmosphere. In August there is the **Festival da Pinga**, or *cachaça* festival, dedicated to the locally distilled sugar cane liquor.

Sightseeing

You should reserve about one day to see the historic district. The district is small enough that you can't miss walking by these recommended sites, but wear comfortable shoes or flip flops.

At the entrance to the district is the **Pedreira Fountain** (Chafariz Pedreira), at Praça Presidente Pedreira. Built of white marble in 1851, with stone plumbing, it used to supply the city with water. During Easter week tiny altars called Passos da Paixão built into the buildings are opened in honor of the devotional procession that passes by.

The main site here is the **Casa da Cultura**, an 18th-century residence that today hosts expositions, workshops and events. There is a rotating exposition downstairs and the permanent one upstairs, offering glimpses into the history and rich local culture, with a small fee to get in. Open Sunday, Monday, Wednesday and Thursday from 10 am-6:30 pm, and Friday and Saturday from 1-9:30 pm (☎ 24-3371-2325).

Casa da Cultura

Built in 1703 to defend against pirates, the **Perpetual Defender Fort** (Forte Defensor Perpétuo) is on the hill called Morro do Forte, with a restored factory where gunpowder was built. Open from 10-12 am and 1-6 pm Wednesday through Sunday. The **Paraty Museum and Center for Traditional Arts** (Museu do Centro de Artes e Tradições Populares de Paraty), is here as well and is worth a look.

The **Patitiba Fortress Barracks and Jail House** (Quartel da Fortaleza da Patitiba) at Santa Rita square (beside the Santa Rita church) was built in the 18th century as the municipal lock-up. Today it houses the Paraty Institute of Art and History and the municipal library.

Historic Churches

The **Santa Rita Church** (Igreja de Santa Rita dos Pardos Libertos) was built in 1722, and opens for visits from Wednesday through Sunday from 9-12 am and 1-6 pm. There is also is the **Paraty Sacred Art Museum**, open Wednesday through Sunday from 9-12 am and 1-6 pm, for a small entrance fee.

Capelinha

A Colonial chapel called the **Capelinha** (Capela de N.S. das Dores), built in 1800, is on Rua Fresca, facing the bay, and open for visits on Wednesday mornings.

Our Lady of the Remedies Cathedral (Matriz de Nossa Senhora dos Remédios) dates back to 1873. It is on Rua da Matriz. Visits are Monday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday mornings and all day Sunday.

The **São Benedito Church** (Igreja de São Benedito e N.S. do Rosário) was built starting in 1725 for the spiritual needs of the slave population. It is in Rosário Square, in front of City Hall, and opens Tuesday mornings for visits.

ALAMBIQUES: WHERE THE CACHAÇA COMES FROM

Like any pirate hideout with a reputation to protect, the history of Paraty is tinged with the silver and gold tones of the sugarcane firewater called *cachaça,* better known here as *pinga*. There were hundreds of *alambiques* (distilleries) during the 18th century and, as the story goes, Paraty even paid off the French pirate Dougay Troin with *cachaça* in exchange for him keeping his hooks off of Rio de Janeiro in 1722. These days there are only about a dozen *alambiques* left, but everywhere you go you will have a chance to sample Brazil's national drink. The local brands are known for their quality, and some of the distilleries allow tourists to visit. The **Fazenda Murycana** doesn't open the distillery to visitors but does operate a restaurant with *comida mineira*, a waterfall and natural pools at the Estrada Paraty-Cunha, at the 6 km marker (☎ 24-3371-1153). **Engenho D'Ouro**, at the Estrada Paraty Cunha, at the 8 Km marker in the Penha neighborhood, does allow visits (☎ 24-9825-0339), as does **Maré Alta**, at the Estrada do Jacu, near the entrance to Paraty Cunha, and the Pantanal neighborhood. The **Engenho Corisco** is on the same highway a little farther on. Along the Rio-Santos Highway there are also numerous distilleries, like **Itatinga**, about 5.4 miles/nine km from the roundabout leading to São Paulo, **Vamos Nessa**, 1.2 miles/two km farther on and, last but not least, **Coqueiro**, 4.8 miles/eight km after the roundabout. *Cachaça* is enjoyed straight or mixed with sugar, limes or other fruit on ice, called a *caipirinha*. Be careful though – the stuff is deceptively potent because of the sugar and it goes straight to the head.

Adventures on the Water

★Beaches

Jabaquara

Downtown, the beaches are polluted but, if you travel to Paraty-Mirim or south to Trinidade, they are cleaner. Though you can get to some of them by bus from the bus station in Paraty, a schooner trip is the better way because it is a lot simpler and more comfortable. There is a nude beach called **Praia dos Pelados**, which is difficult to reach unless you hire a boat from the Vila de Trinidade. Swimming downtown is not recommended because of the pollution, but you can still catch some rays and enjoy the views. **Jabaquara** can be reached by trail from the Perpetual Defender Fort. At the far end of the long beach there is the Toca do Kassununga, an ancient indigenous burial ground. At **Pontal**, right downtown, you can rent sailboats, motorboats, and kayaks. At **Engenho D'água**, which can be reached only by boat, there are the ruins of a Colonial sugar mill.

★★Boat Excursions

Boat excursions are highly recommended, either rented by the hour or in group-tours that are easily arranged from town. Normally, you have a choice of stops such as Praia da Lula, Praia Vermelha, Ilha Comprida and various others, or you can arrange custom trips to the beaches or islands of Trindade and Paraty-Mirim. At the docks, you can rent a boat for up to 10 people for $10-25 per hour, depending on the type of boat. Keep in mind that there should be enough life preservers for everyone on board and the better boats have a radio.

Charters vary greatly in price, and prices go up during high season. Group bay tours are the easiest and cheapest way to go, departing daily for four to five hours with stops for swimming, sometimes with an optional lunch. Typically, they cost $10-15 per person.

Get information right at the docks or at any of the various offices around the historic district.

For a group day-trip on a schooner, **Paraty Antigona** has offices at Praça da Bandeira, shop 2 (☎ 24-3371-7492 or 24-3371-2199). **Agência Planeta Paraty** has day-trips to Trindade for a minimum of two people at about $15 per person. Their office is at Rua Dona Geralda, 73A, in the historic district (☎ 24-3371-1254).

Options right at the docks (Praça da Bandeira) include the ***Nova Conquista*** schooner, which offers overnights (☎ 24-3371-1432 or 24-9999-7230), the ***Ponta do Bulé*** speedboat (☎ 24-3371-1283) and the ***Estrela da Manhã*** (☎ 24-3371-1251 or 24-3371-4552). Charter companies with offices in the historic district include **Baía de Paraty**, at Rua da Lapa (☎ 24-3371-2237), **Barco Ticarola**, at Rua Marechal Deodoro, 502 (☎ 24-3371-2343) or **Bucanero's** at Praça Governador Macedo Soares (☎ 24-3371-2123 or 24-9992-8936).

For a nicer custom trip, consider chartering a schooner. Generally, it's cheaper if you travel in a group, but the **Outside Safari** charter has a 56-foot three-mast schooner that will take from two to eight people. A day-trip to Saco de Mananguá fjord with an English-speaking skipper costs about $400. If you want to sleep on board, there is a two-day excursion to Ilha Grande, stopping at various points along the way for about $800 (not counting meals at local restaurants) – and this can be a more economical option than staying in a hotel if you have enough people. Make reservations with Mario Augusto Rodrigues at www.outsidesafari.com or call ☎ 35-3363-1622 or 35-9113-2200.

A little bit cheaper but less comfortable are the charters by **Alcance Paraty Turismo**, offering a 38-foot sailboat for up to six people (or overnight for two couples) at around $200 per day. Alcance is at Avenida

Roberto Silveira, 86 (☎ 24-3371-6442 or 24-3371-2454; www.alcanceparaty.tur.br).

★Diving

As with the rest of the Ilha Grande Bay, the ocean near Paraty is an excellent option for diving in the Southeast region. Conditions are similar at the 65 islands and reefs nearby, with a wide range of dive conditions like those of Angra or Ilha Grande. But the visibility here is not quite as good, at about 30-35 feet on an average day in most places, and you really need to travel out about at least an hour to get good visibility. The boat ride is not uncomfortable, though, as the water here tends to be calmer and warmer.

Most of the sites are sheltered from the cold, deep ocean currents that make their way northward from Antarctica and hit the coast near Arraial do Cabo (covered in the *Sun Coast* chapter). The sea floor ranges from rock formations with passages you can swim through to coral reefs and sandy areas, and there are a couple of shipwrecks for advanced divers. There is a good variety of sea life here, including sea horses, and in December and January you can sometimes spot whales or dolphins on the way north to Abrolhos (see the *Bahia* chapter). As with the rest of the the bay, dives are possible in sheltered inlets even in the rain. For this reason, operators may not necessarily cancel, but you may want to opt out since the boat rides are longer and not much fun in the rain. On the plus side, you can generally count on high-quality services and good vessels. A two-tank dive costs around $60 with equipment included but prices can go up in the high season so call around to get the best deal.

Recommended dive operators:

Alpha Dive Atividades Subaquáticas has offices in the historic district at Praça da Bandeira, 1 (Shop 3), with daily departures. They are PDIC-certified. Soft drinks are provided. (☎ 24-3371-2798; alphadive@terra.com.br).

UNA Dive, at Rua da Lapa, 213, in the historic district, has two schooners for large groups and one motorboat. The schooners are more comfortable. The operator is PADI certified (www.unatouredive.com.br).

UNA Dive boat

Sport Fishing

Paraty has different options, from shore fishing to coastal and deep-water trips. **Royal Charlotte** has good ships and crew with professional equipment. They're at Marina Porto Imperial (www.royalcharlotte.com.br; ☎ 24-3371-8706 or 24-9958-4968).

UNA Tour, at Rua da Lapa, 213, in Old Town, has overnight sport fishing charters that leave at 5 pm and return at 7 am the following day.

They use schooners for groups of up to 15 people. Contact them via www.unatouredive.com.br.

Adventures on Land

Local indigenous groups used trails through the Atlantic rainforest that were later converted into an overland cargo route for the gold mined in the adjacent territory of Minas Gerais and shipped out from Paraty. The trail was abandoned when the Emperor built a railroad, but there is a section near Paraty still in good condition where you can hike. It starts in Penha, which can be reached by bus from Paraty for a couple of dollars. There, at the historic church, is the entrance to the steep and curvy trail. In the rain it can be very dangerous so be careful.

South American coati

You can opt to go on foot, horseback or by four-wheel-drive vehicle. Along the way are Colonial buildings, guesthouses, restaurants, and artists' studios on the six miles of trail through the **Serra da Bocaina National Park**. There are several waterfalls and a smooth rockslide into a natural pool along the route. The park itself covers 280,000 acres of dense forest with many kinds of plants typical of the Atlantic rainforest and creatures such as sloths, anteaters, coatis, tapirs, and monkeys. You should bring water, insect repellent, sunscreen, a towel, swimwear and adequate shoes for the trail.

Teatro Espaço has highly recommended guided walks, leaving Wednesday through Sunday at 10:30 am by bus. This walk is about 1.6 miles and ends at a plantation, with an English-speaking guide and a "burro-bar" (a burro carrying drinks and sandwiches). The trip costs $12.50 per person plus about $5 for the optional lunch. On horseback, a full-day trip costs $30. Teatro Espaço is at Rua Dona Geralda, 327, in the historic district (☎ 24-3371-1575).

What to Buy

Throughout the historic district are shops and artists' studios selling ceramics, sculpture, indigenous art, paintings, ornamental objects and other goods. Prices tend to be steep due to the constant tourist flow, though in off-season it might pay to bargain for original works if you can haggle directly with the artist.

Where to Stay

Always plan to make reservations during the busy season. Service charges of 10% are normally added to the bill.

Coxixo Hotel ($$) at Rua do Comércio, 362, in the historic district, is a comfortable hotel with full amenities and boat excursions. Children over 15 welcome. Accepts all major credit cards (☎ 24-3371-8325 or 24-3371-8327).

Parque Hotel Perequê ($$) has comfortable lodging at Avenida Beira Rio, 70. Accepts DinersClub and Visa (☎ 24-3371-2312).

Pousada das Canoas

Pousada das Canoas ($) has comfortable and affordable rooms at Avenida Roberto da Silveira, 279. Major credit cards accepted (☎ 24-3371-1133 or 24-3371-1660).

Pousada Brunello ($), Avenida Praia do Jabaquara, 14, is simple with a good price (☎ 24-3371-2394).

Pousada Pardieiro ($$$), Rua do Comércio, 74 (downtown), is pleasant. Children over 15 welcome. Visa and MasterCard accepted (☎ 24-3371-1370 or 24-3371-1139).

Pousada Do Sândi ($$$) at Largo do Rosário, 1 in the historic district is comfortable and in a nice location. Major credit cards accepted (☎ 24-3371-2100).

Pousada Bromélias

Pousada Bromélias ($$), on the Rio-Santos Highway, Km 562 in the Graúna area, is relaxing and surrounded by forest. Major credit cards accepted (☎ 24-3371-2791).

Pousada Arte Urquijo ($$$) at Rua Dona Geralda, 79 in the historic district, has a pleasant ambience. MasterCard and Visa accepted (☎ 24-3371-1362).

Pousada Do Ouro ($$), Rua Dr. Pereira (Rua da Praia), 145 in the historic district, has good quality for the price. Major credit cards accepted (☎ 24-3371-1378 or 24-3371-1311).

Pousada Da Marquesa ($) is an affordable guesthouse, in the historic district, at Rua Dona Geralda, 69. Major credit cards accepted (☎ 24-3711-1263 or 24-3711-1299).

Pousada Do Cais ($), Travessa Santa Rita, 20 in the historic district, is simple but comfortable. Visa and American Express accepted (☎ 24-3371-1200 or 24-3371-1522).

Pousada Morro do Forte ($) is comfortable and inexpensive at Rua Orlando Carpinelli, 2, with a charter sailboat option to Ilha Grande or to Rio de Janeiro (☎ 24-3371-1211).

Where to Eat

Restaurante Banana da Terra ($$), Rua Samuel Costa, 208, serves seafood (☎ 24-3371-1725).

Kontiki Restaurante

Kontiki Restaurante ($$) is a short boat ride from the docks in Paraty to Ilha Duas Irmãs, with transport provided by the restaurant. The specialty is seafood (☎ 24-3371-1666 or 24-9999-9599).

Restaurante do Hiltinho ($$) is one of the better options for seafood. Rua Marechal Deodoro, 233 (☎ 24-3371-1432).

Restaurante Abel ($$) is a seafood restaurant at Rua do Comércio, 40 in the historic district (☎ 24-3371-1420).

Porto Entreposto Cultural ($$$) serves international and Brazilian cuisine in the historic district at Rua do Comercio, 36 (☎ 24-3371-1058).

Sushi Paraty ($$) offers Japanese and pan-Asian food in front of the port in the historic district, at Praça do Porto, 1 (☎ 24 3371-3161).

Thai Brasil ($$$) serves Thai food at Rua D. Geralda, 345 (☎ 24-3371-0127).

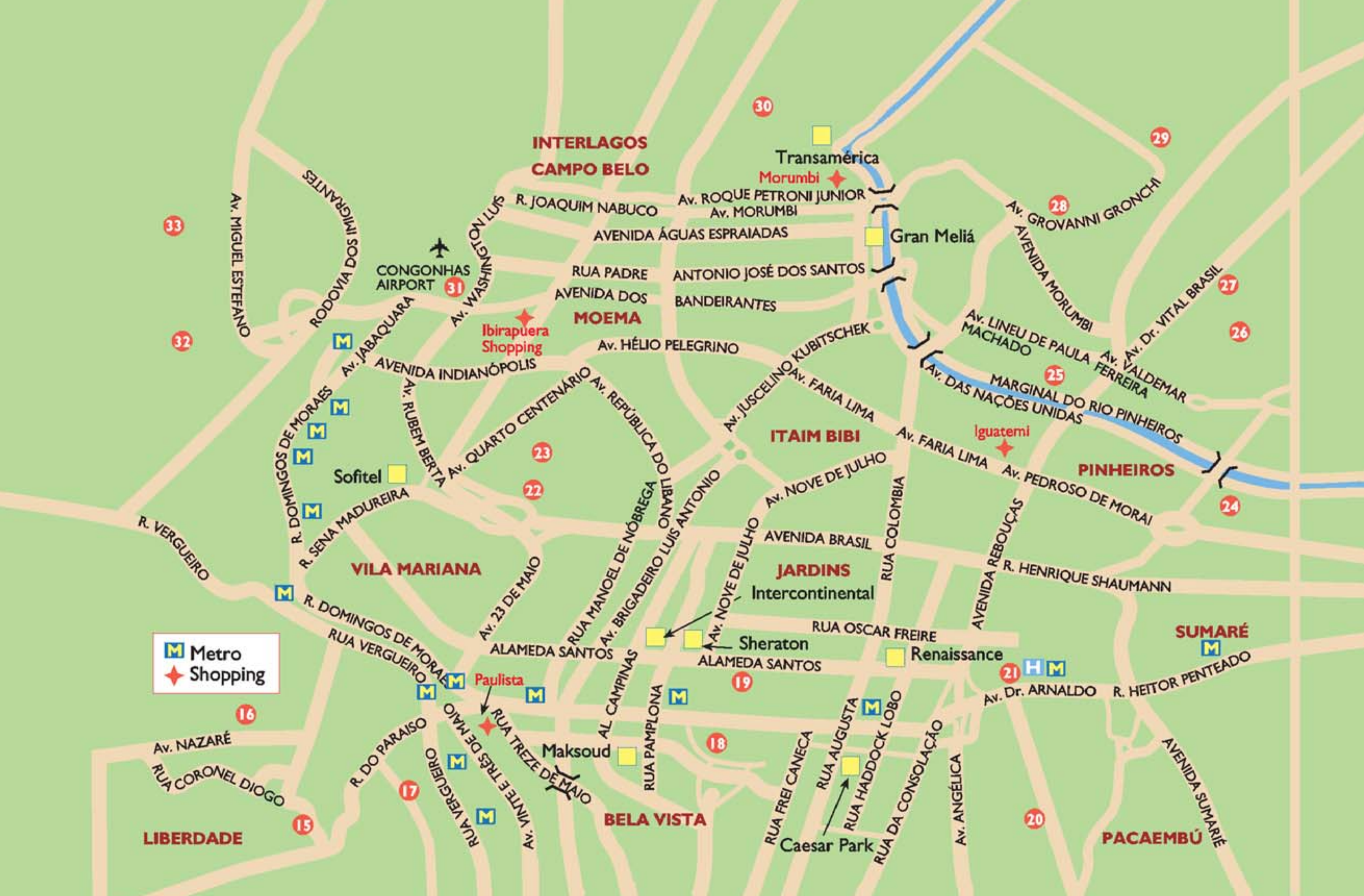
Punto di Vino, Rua Marechal Deodoro, 129, has Italian food and opens daily (☎ 24-3371-1348)

Paraty 33 ($$) offers seafood and international fare at Rua Maria Jacome de Mello, 357. There is a separate bar with live music (☎ 24-3371-7317).

São Paulo & Surroundings

São Paulo skyline

The state of São Paulo is Brazil's economic powerhouse. One of the principal gateways to the country, São Paulo is best known for its gargantuan capital city of the same name. But there is more here to see besides the city, especially the Paulista Coast and Campos do Jordão, a chic getaway for well-heeled Paulistanos, as natives of the capital are known. Those from the state call themselves Paulistas with pride. Vital to the Brazilian culture, the interior of the state is the most populous, as well as the largest single contributor to the nation's economy, with a well-developed infrastructure and a thriving industrial and agricultural complex. The state has a rich and colorful history, starting with the founding of Vila de São Vicente in 1532 by the Portuguese explorer Martim Afonso de Souza. Jesuit missionaries soon arrived, spreading out into the mountainous interior just beyond the coast and helping to establish a foothold in the New World for the Portuguese crown. For many years, the colony was an agricultural producer, making use of indigenous slaves in the sugar cane fields. In the next hundred years or so, explorers called *Bandeirantes* (named for their symbolic flags, or bandeiras) pressed inland in search of adventure, slaves, gold and conquest. By 1711, the well defended villa had grown into a city but paled next to the rising city of Vila Rica where gold had been discovered in the interior of Minas Gerais. Cut off from Minas Gerais by a royal decree, the colony remained poor and served for little more than to house troops stationed there to keep order over the comparatively large indigenous population at the time. With the influx of immigrants, the region became increasingly diverse in terms of ethnicity. São Paulo had discovered coffee, and this labor-intensive crop in the 1800s became incredibly successful. To this day, the state and its neighbor Minas Gerais together are the world's largest coffee producers. With the decline of the Gold Rush, this became the most important region to the economy and as more and more immigrants poured into São Paulo into the 20th century, it became the most prosperous state in Brazil. This legacy of cultural diversity and economic opportunity remains a striking characteristics of São Paulo.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SUMARÉ
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LIBERDADE
Transamérica
Morumbi
Gran Meliá
Sofitel
Intercontinental
Sheraton
Renaissance
Maksoud
Caesar Park
Iguatemi
Ibirapuera Shopping
Paulista
CONGONHAS AIRPORT
Av. ROQUE PETRONI JUNIOR
Av. MORUMBI
R. JOAQUIM NABUCO
AVENIDA ÁGUAS ESPRAIADAS
RUA PADRE ANTONIO JOSÉ DOS SANTOS
AVENIDA DOS BANDEIRANTES
Av. HÉLIO PELEGRINO
AVENIDA INDIANÓPOLIS
Av. WASHINGTON LUÍS
Av. JABAQUARA
RODOVIA DOS IMIGRANTES
Av. MIGUEL ESTEFANO
R. DOMINGOS DE MORAES
R. SENA MADUREIRA
Av. RUBEM BERTA
Av. QUARTO CENTENÁRIO
Av. REPÚBLICA DO LIBANO
Av. JUSCELINO KUBITSCHEK
Av. FARIA LIMA
Av. FARIA LIMA
Av. PEDROSO DE MORAI
Av. NOVE DE JULHO
Av. NOVE DE JULHO
AVENIDA BRASIL
RUA COLOMBIA
AVENIDA REBOUÇAS
R. HENRIQUE SHAUMANN
RUA OSCAR FREIRE
ALAMEDA SANTOS
ALAMEDA SANTOS
Av. BRIGADEIRO LUIS ANTONIO
RUA MANOEL DE NÓBREGA
Av. 23 DE MAIO
AL CAMPINAS
RUA PAMPLONA
RUA FREI CANECA
RUA AUGUSTA
RUA HADDOCK LOBO
RUA DA CONSOLAÇÃO
Av. ANGÉLICA
AVENIDA SUMARIÉ
Av. Dr. ARNALDO
R. HEITOR PENTEADO
Av. GROVANNI GRONCHI
AVENIDA MORUMBI
Av. Dr. VITAL BRASIL
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Av. LINEU DE PAULA MACHADO
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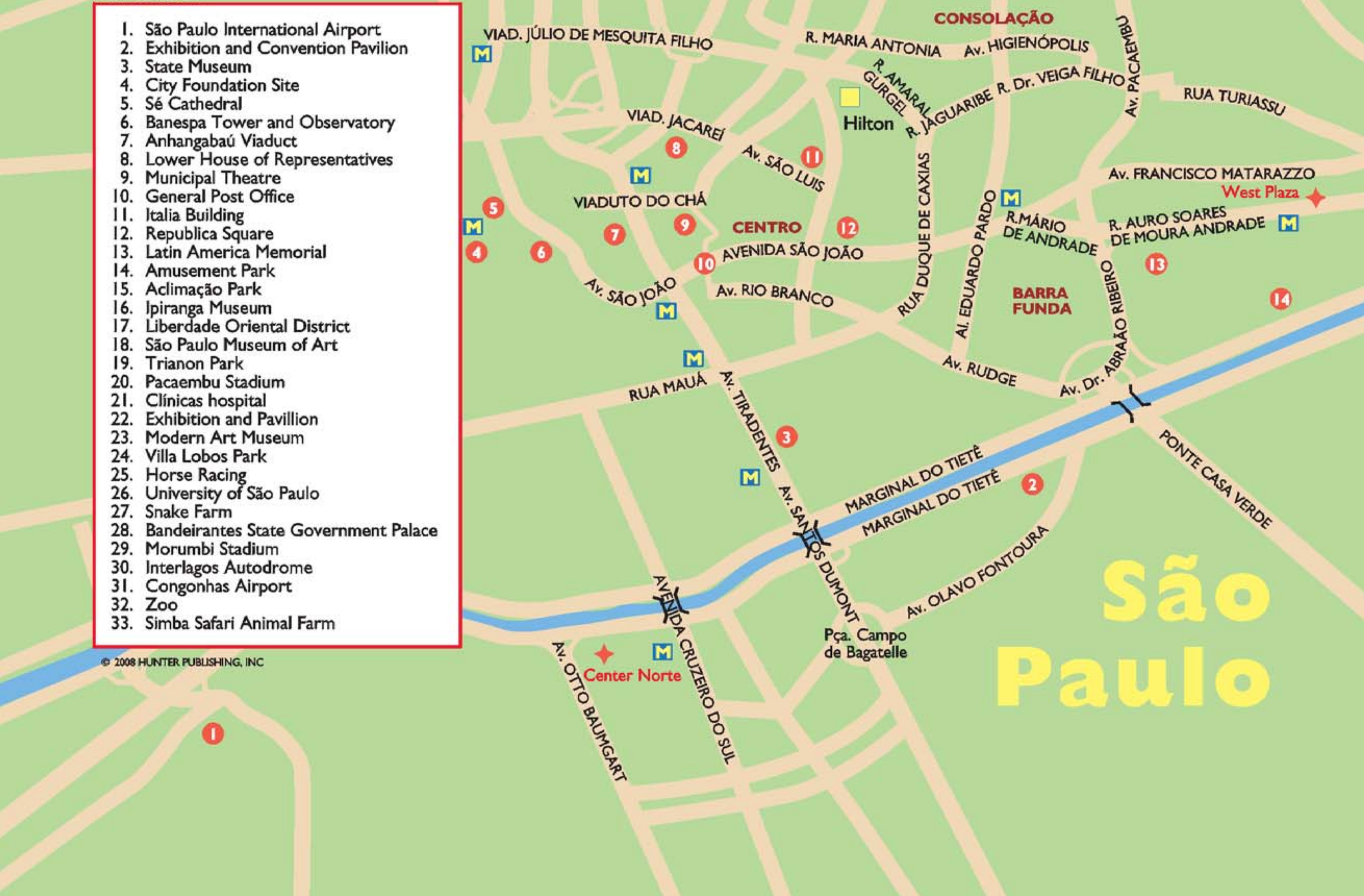
1. São Paulo International Airport
2. Exhibition and Convention Pavilion
3. State Museum
4. City Foundation Site
5. Sé Cathedral
6. Banespa Tower and Observatory
7. Anhangabaú Viaduct
8. Lower House of Representatives
9. Municipal Theatre
10. General Post Office
11. Italia Building
12. Republica Square
13. Latin America Memorial
14. Amusement Park
15. Aclimação Park
16. Ipiranga Museum
17. Liberdade Oriental District
18. São Paulo Museum of Art
19. Trianon Park
20. Pacaembu Stadium
21. Clínicas hospital
22. Exhibition and Pavillion
23. Modern Art Museum
24. Villa Lobos Park
25. Horse Racing
26. University of São Paulo
27. Snake Farm
28. Bandeirantes State Government Palace
29. Morumbi Stadium
30. Interlagos Autodrome
31. Congonhas Airport
32. Zoo
33. Simba Safari Animal Farm
São Paulo
CONSOLAÇÃO
CENTRO
BARRA FUNDA
VIAD. JÚLIO DE MESQUITA FILHO
R. MARIA ANTONIA
Av. HIGIENÓPOLIS
R. AMARAL GURGEL
R. JAGUARIBE
R. Dr. VEIGA FILHO
Av. PACAEMBU
RUA TURIASSU
Hilton
VIAD. JACAREÍ
Av. SÃO LUIS
Av. FRANCISCO MATARAZZO
West Plaza
VIADUTO DO CHÁ
RUA DUQUE DE CAXIAS
Al. EDUARDO PARDO
R.MÁRIO DE ANDRADE
R. AURO SOARES DE MOURA ANDRADE
AVENIDA SÃO JOÃO
Av. SÃO JOÃO
Av. RIO BRANCO
Av. Dr. ABRAÃO RIBEIRO
Av. RUDGE
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São Paulo

- Brazil's center of business and commerce
- The sprawling metropolis has nightlife, culture and shopping
- Check out the museums or famous Ibirapuera Park

São Paulo is Brazil's largest city and the main center of business. By some estimates the city and its suburbs have 20-25 million inhabitants, making this the third-largest city in the world after Tokyo and Mexico City. Given such scale, there are some compelling reasons to visit but, to be frank, the city is not a top destination. Nightlife, shopping, dining and culture are definitely the strongest points. São Paulo is the most sophisticated city in Brazil with some of the best overall services and highest per capita income, but its shantytowns and crumbling infrastructureth reflect the great divide between rich and poor that exists in Brazil.

Paulistanos, as the locals are known, both love and hate their city, raving about its many leisure options but apt to complain about the gridlock, crime and smog. Yet it is here more than anywhere else in the country where jobs are found, and every year more migrants pour in from other parts of the country and the world. Some neighborhoods in fact are colonies for immigrants. Liberdade, for example, is an Asian neighborhood with steam wafting from food stands and all the signs are in Japanese (even at McDonalds). In Bela Vista, better known as Bixiga, it is at least as common to hear Italian as it is Portuguese. For this reason, São Paulo is one of the easiest cities for foreigners to blend in. Paulistanos are well traveled and worldly, and locals are eager to show visitors the good things the city has to offer. There are some excellent museums and cultural activities, and the city is perhaps the best place in all of South America to shop (but the prices are comparable to other major cities of the world).

Some people liken the city to a "tropical New York" but comparisons like this fail to capture the unique lifestyle. São Paulo, for all its warts and virtues, is one-of-a-kind. Most visitors come here on business but a short trip can be a lot of fun. Cold in the winter and muggy in the summer, São Paulo can not be called beautiful, but it has its charms when you consider the lively Centro, hip Pinheiros and Vila Madalena, the artsy Luz district, or the Ibirapuera park district called the Jardins. On the weekends and holidays, Paulistanos tend to head out of town to relax, and this is not a bad tip for international travelers as well. Without being unfair to the city you can pretty much see the best of what there is in two days or less. Check out some of the side-trips listed in this chapter, such as chic Campos do Jordão or the beaches of the Paulista Coast, which are more enjoyable.

How to Get Here

International arrivals are at **Guarulhos International Airport** on Rodovia Helio Smidt (☎ 11-6445-2945 or 11-6421-1101), about one hour from the Centro area.

There is a cheap and convenient ground shuttle that leaves from the airport, stopping at points around the city – get information from the **EMTU Airport Service** (☎ 11-6445-2505 or 0800-190-088). The terminal is at Praça Republica in the Centro.

Via plane from inside Brazil you will normally arrive at **Aeroporto Congonhas** on Avenida Washington Luis (☎ 11-5090-9000). Sometimes you will need to make a connection between the airports for a connecting flight and the airlines provide a shuttle bus. Rio de Janeiro is only 35 minutes away by plane on the ponte aerea airbus (but count on time for ticketing and waiting around to board the busy flights). You can just show up and buy a ticket but it is better to make reservations with the airlines Varig, TAM, or Gol. See listings in the front of this book.

> Note: At the airports avoid the touts in the departure lounge and booths offering "radio taxis." These offer no benefit and are much more expensive. There are always registered common cabs at the airports right outside and any guard or information booth can point the way.

Arriving by bus, the main bus terminals are: **Terminal de Barra Funda** on Avemida Auro Soares de Moura Andrade 664 (☎ 11-3612-1782); **Terminal de Jabaquara** (☎ 11-5012-2256 or 11-5012-5753) on Rua Jequitibás close to the Jabaquara Metrô station; and **Terminal Tietê** on Avenida Cruzeiro do Sul 1800 in the Santana neighborhood (☎ 11-3235-0322).

Getting Oriented

São Paulo's size apart, getting around as a foreigner is easier than elsewhere in the country, since English, Spanish, French, Italian and even Japanese speakers are more common. The city's treasures are found indoors for the most part and there are no beaches. Local customs tend to favor elegance and fashion more than other major cities of Brazil – if you dress well you will probably be treated better at most places. São Paulo has a wicked reputation for crime, but much of the violence is exaggerated by the media. Even in the best areas of town it pays to be on your guard against snatch-and-run type theft and pickpocketing, especially around bus stops, intersections, and areas with a lot of commerce. Also, keep your windows rolled up in cars and taxis, especially at intersections. The risk can be minimized by common sense – a drunken, visibly lost foreigner waving cash is probably more likely to be robbed than locals. For more on this see the safety tips in the front of this book. In the unlikely event you do have a problem, get in touch with the English-speaking Tourist Police (Delegacia do Turista) in the Centro (☎ 11-3214-0209).

Getting Around

The size of São Paulo is mind-boggling and even native Paulistanos don't know where everything is. Fortunately, the better sections of town are close to one another and you can effectively limit your stay to these areas. Most of the culture, hotels, restaurants, bars and entertainment are in the neighborhoods of the Centro, Jardins, Itaim Bibi, Pinheiros, Higienópolis, Vila Madalena, Brooklin, Moema, Bela Vista, Vila Mariana, Vila Olímpia and Morumbi. Once close to your destination, getting around is usually easiest on foot but at night a taxi is not a bad idea. In the *Sightseeing* section below, there are suggestions for exploring on foot. Given the size of the city, its confusing layout, and the possibility of assaults, you may really want to stick to guided walking tours.

Driving is not recommended due to the heavy traffic, although the streets are well marked in most areas of the city. Traffic is so bad that there is a special "*rodizio*" system where cars with specific license plate numbers are banned from driving during the rush hours of 7-10 am and 5-8 pm. The system works like this: plates ending in 1 or 2 are prohibited Monday, 3 or 4 on Tuesday and so on to Friday. There are also radar speed traps all around the city. If you are planning a side-trip you can rent a car at Hertz (☎ 0800-701-7300) Avis (☎ 11-4225-8456) or Localiza (☎ 0800-99-2000).

Metered **taxis** offer comfort and convenience, but can be a little expensive. In São Paulo, it is better to use the taxi stands rather than hailing them off the street (the opposite is true in Rio). Drivers may not know your destination, but they always carry a street guide. Note, in general the Paulistano taxi drivers are honest, so don't assume they are taking advantage of you if they don't know the way. Taxi stands are easy to spot – the cars are white and should have their documentation with the photo and name of the driver posted on the dashboard. As in other major cities the meter should read "1" (the lower rate). At night, when there are three or more passengers, certain holidays and the entire month of October, it should read "2." Better hotels often have their own "registered" taxis, which are common cabs that hang out in front, or they can easily call one for you. **Coopertax** (☎ 11-6941-2555) is the best option to call for a taxi. When arriving at the airport, avoid the touts offering "radio-taxis," which are a complete rip-off, and take a common cab (the phrase is "taxi comum") – you may have to walk a few more yards to get to the stand but you'll save at least 25%.

The clean, safe and efficient Metrô **subway** system is recommended. The only real problem, apart from the crowds, is that the system does not cover the entire city. Fortunately, most of the main attractions are at or near the subway stops. The website www.metro.sp.gov.br has detailed info in English about the routes, or you can call ☎ 11-3371-7411. The system is pretty easy to figure out. People 65 and older get to ride free (get an "idoso" ticket at the window). You will normally want only a subway ticket, or *bilhete exclusivo*, but you can also buy a *bilhete integrado*, which includes bus fare if you opt to take your chances on the bus system. One-way fare was about a dollar at time of writing (a little extra on the isolated lilac colored line which you probably won't need either). You can only enter from 4:40 am to 12 pm every day (including for transfers within the system!). All lines are color coded, and inside the cars and stations are maps showing transfer stations and stops. Some of the stations are decorated, and all are generally well policed.

Frankly, city **buses** are not worth the trouble. You can certainly get around on them cheaply once you know the city, but given the hassles (they are slow, crowded, and hard to figure out) it's easier and safer to take a taxi or the subway. If you insist on trying your luck, ask at your hotel for bus routes to your destination or check with the tourist info centers listed in this chapter. Getting to another city is another story, and interurban buses are a cheap and comfortable way to get to other areas in the Southeast Region.

For More Information

There are tourist information centers at the Guarulhos International Airport (☎ 11-6445-2945) and Congonhas local airport (☎ 11-5090-9000).

You can also visit information booths at Parque do Ibirapuera (near Gate 10) from 7 am-6 pm, the Iguatemi shopping center on Avenida Brigadeiro Faria Lima weekdays from 9 am-6 pm, at Parque da Luz (next to the Pinacoteca) on Avenida Ribeiro de Lima, 99, Tuesday through Fridays from 9 am-6 pm, on Avenida Paulista facing the Parque Trianon, from 9 am-6 pm, or at Praça da República near Rua 7 de Abril from 9 am-6 pm.

Check out the websites run by the government that provide basic information for travelers: **www.saopaulo.sp.gov.br**, and **www.cultura.sp.gov.br**. One of the best is the subway website, believe it or not: **www.metro.sp.gov.br**.

São Paulo has constantly new and limited-time events listed in local newspapers and magazines. While in Portuguese, this is where to look for short-term events in São Paulo. The best and most complete listings are in the magazine *Veja*, available at newsstands practically anywhere (as well as in hotel lobbies). You can also look in the local newspapers like the *Estado de S. Paulo* (the most traditional) or *Folha de São Paulo* (the best for "alternative" nightlife and arts), which are usually available in hotel lobbies.

The websites **www.BrazilMax.com** and www.**Gringoes.com** are both run by ex-pat journalists and are filled with tips and suggestions about São Paulo.

TURISMETRÔ: SEEING THE CITY ON THE SUBWAY

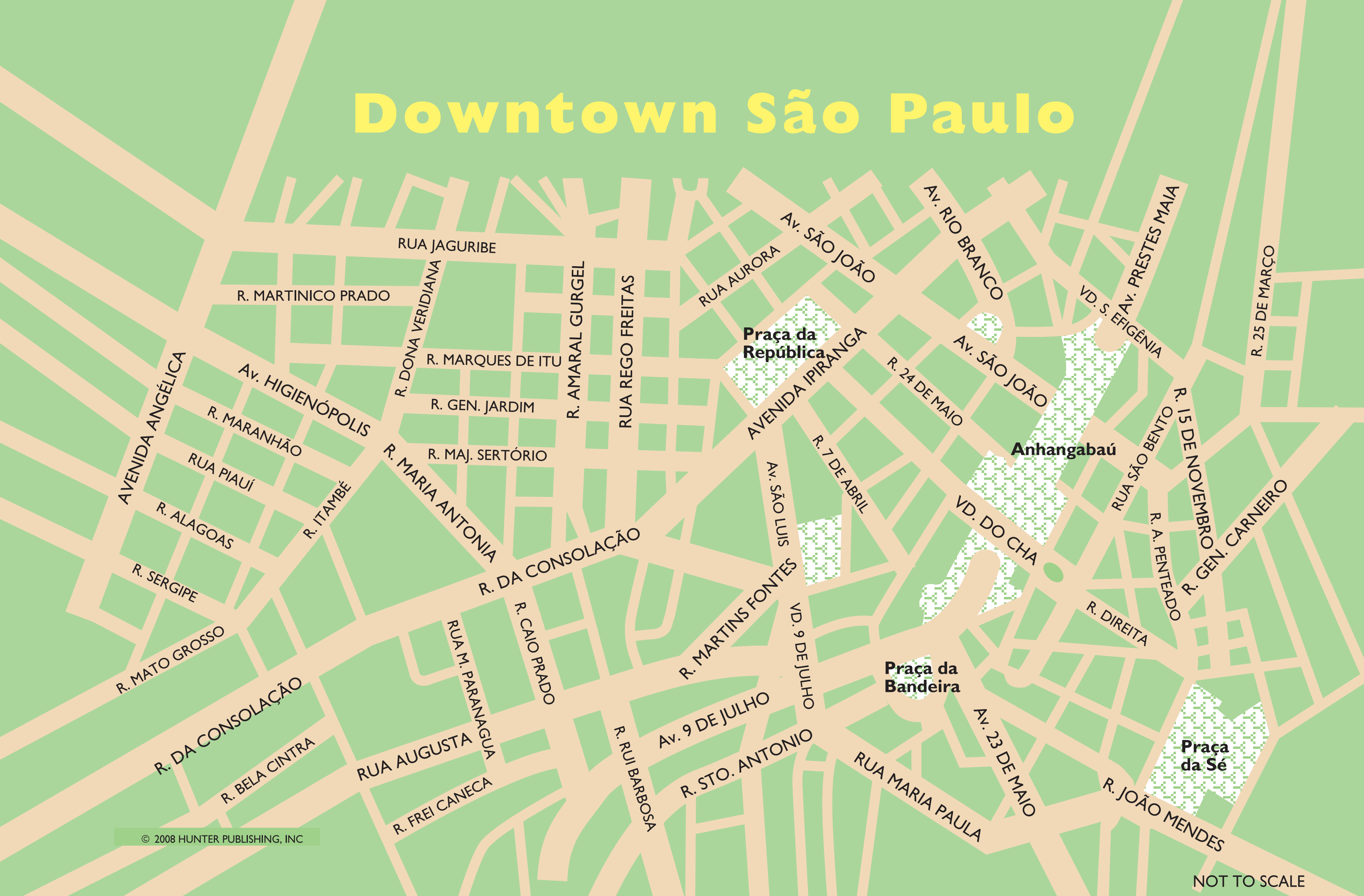
There is a well run city tour option called Turismetrô at the Sé subway station on weekends. This is a great, inexpensive way to see the main sights in a guided group. It is probably safer than wandering around town on your own and can be a whole lot more convenient. Just show up at the specially marked Turismetrô window to buy your ticket. You can also make a reservation by phone (☎ 11-6958-3714). There are five different routes to choose from, requiring from one to three tickets each. Hours are 2 pm on Saturday and 9 am or 2 pm on Sunday (the Sé Route, which is the most popular, leaves at 9 am on Saturday). Departures are punctual so try to get there 20 minutes early. The trips take about three hours. The Sé Route goes to 17 different locations in the Centro, including Sé Cathedral and the Mosteiro de São Bento, and is arguably the best general city tour. The Memórias Route includes an optional steam engine ride from the old Bresser Station, but visits only a few sites (probably the best if you don't want to walk too much). The Paulista Route includes some historical sites along the famous Avenida Paulista, including the Trianon-Masp gardens, where you can visit the Masp museum if you wish at the end of the trip. The São Francisco Route includes the main churches and other historic buildings. Finally, the Luz Route includes a full tour of the grand old Luz station as well the arts of the Pinacoteca. For more details about the routes, along with photos, consult the subway's website at www.metro.sp.gov.br, click on the English version and then on the Turismetrô link.

Sightseeing

São Paulo's options for sightseeing include about 70 museums, cultural centers, historic churches, public monuments, plazas and parks. A good option is to choose a part of town to spend part or all of your day exploring, so you can soak in some of the local atmosphere and culture. Following are some of the better known landmarks in areas that are easy to get to, divided according to neighborhood.

Centro

The lively downtown area of the Centro (actually one of several "downtowns") can be an interesting place to walk around for a few hours. Go during the day when it is a lot safer.


Downtown São Paulo
RUA JAGURIBE
R. MARTINICO PRADO
R. DONA VERIDIANA
R. MARQUES DE ITU
R. GEN. JARDIM
R. MAJ. SERTÓRIO
R. AMARAL GURGEL
RUA REGO FREITAS
RUA AURORA
Av. SÃO JOÃO
Av. RIO BRANCO
Av. PRESTES MAIA
VD. S. EFIGÊNIA
R. 25 DE MARÇO
Praça da República
AVENIDA IPIRANGA
R. 24 DE MAIO
Av. SÃO JOÃO
Anhangabaú
RUA SÃO BENTO
R. 15 DE NOVEMBRO
R. GEN. CARNEIRO
R. A. PENTEADO
R. DIREITA
VD. DO CHA
R. 7 DE ABRIL
Av. SÃO LUIS
AVENIDA ANGÉLICA
Av. HIGIENÓPOLIS
R. MARANHÃO
RUA PIAUÍ
R. ALAGOAS
R. ITAMBÉ
R. SERGIPE
R. MARIA ANTONIA
R. DA CONSOLAÇÃO
R. MATO GROSSO
R. DA CONSOLAÇÃO
R. BELA CINTRA
RUA AUGUSTA
R. FREI CANECA
RUA M. PARANAGUA
R. CAIO PRADO
R. MARTINS FONTES
VD. 9 DE JULHO
Av. 9 DE JULHO
R. RUI BARBOSA
R. STO. ANTONIO
Praça da Bandeira
Av. 23 DE MAIO
RUA MARIA PAULA
Praça da Sé
R. JOÃO MENDES
NOT TO SCALE

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One of the most important structures is the **Metropolitan Cathedral** at Praça Sé (the Sé subway stop is in the huge public square out front), the largest in the city (☎ 11-3107-6832).

Metropolitan Cathedral

Nearby is the grand old **Teatro Municipal** at Praça Ramos de Azevedo (☎ 11-3223-3022), which has seasonal presentations and can be visited during the day.

In this area is a historic church from 1632 called **Igreja da Ordem Terceira do Carmo** on Rangel Pestana 230 (☎ 11-3242-8361).

Not far is the **Edifício Itália**, which has an excellent lunch buffet on the sixth floor. There is also an impressive view from the more elegant restaurant on the top floor. You are supposed to be a patron of the restaurant **Terraço Itália** (☎ 11-257-6566) to enjoy the view, but the maitre d' does not always mind if you pop in just to take a discrete look or snap a photo. This used to be the tallest building in town.

Praça da República Park

Just down the street is **Praça da República**, a stately park periodically used as a popular street fair, or given over to indigents. This is pure São Paulo, with its rumbling traffic, crowds and streetside juice bars. There are sometimes rounds of capoeira, the Afro-Brazilian fighting dance, or music shows at the plaza for a bit of local culture.

The **Copan Building**, on Avenida São Luís, 130/140, and Avenida Ipiranga, 200, was designed by famous Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer in the shape of an "S."

Not far from there is the **Mosteiro de São Bento**, a German monastary from 1922. There are Gregorian chants here on weekdays at 7 am, Saturdays at 6 am, and Sunday at 10 am. It is at the Largo São Bento (☎ 11-228-3633).

For a little history, head to the **Páteo do Colégio** (☎ 11-3105-6898), a boys' school set up by missionaries for the indigenous in 1554.

Close by is the **Solar da Marquesa** mansion house and **São Paulo City Museum**, on Rua Roberto Simonsen, 136 (☎ 11-3105-2030).

Luz District

Near the Luz subway stop on Praça da Luz, the **Pinacoteca do Estado** (☎ 11-3229-9844) has one of the better collections of Brazilian art in the city. Notable works are by Portinari, di Cavalcanti, and Tarsila do Amaral. Access is via Avenida Tiradentes.

Pinacoteca do Estado

In an annex is the **Estação Pinacoteca**, with a discrete but grim reminder of civil repression during the military dictatorship of 1964-1973. The lower level has cells where political prisoners were detained, some never to leave, called the Liberty Memorial (Memorial de Liberdade). The **Museu de Arte Sacra** has a notable religious art collection at Avenida Tiradentes, 676 (☎ 11-3326-1373), which is closed Monday.

The neighborhood also has one of the most modern concert spaces in the city at the **Sala São Paulo**, in the Estação Julio Prestes train station. There are concerts Thursday at 9 pm and Saturday at 4:30 pm (☎ 11-3337-5414).

There is a park in the neighborhood called **Parque da Luz**, worth checking out. Like the Centro, the area around the subway station has a history of street crime but is generally safe to visit during the day. Note that the beautiful old Luz subway station itself is considered a landmark and was once a rail depot used during the coffee boom.

The Jardins & Ibirapuera Park

The upscale region of the Jardins and the central Parque da Ibirapuera is near Avenida Paulista, a famous 1.7-mile/2.8-km strip of high-rises in the financial district.

Ibirapuera Park

Ibirapuera Park itself is a blessing to gritty São Paulo and pleasant place to stroll or jog. You should take a taxi to get here as it is not very close to the subway stops. As with Central Park in New York, Paulistanos enjoy coming on the weekends to hang out and relax, or to see some of the city's best museums. Woman traveling alone should be careful here in isolated areas or after dark.

Museum of Contemporary Art

The **Museu de Arte Contemporânea** (MAC), is a contemporary art museum on Rua da Reitora, 160 (aka the Pavilhão Padre Manoel da Nóbrega) near gate number three inside the park, with a significant permanent collection of Brazilian and other artists like Picasso and Matisse, plus rotating exhibits (☎ 11-5549-9688).

Avenida Paulista is worth a look to see the heart of this modern city (and a place where you won't have any trouble finding cash machines). It is especially beautiful at night with the incredible urban lighting. The best way to get a glimpse of Avenida Paulista is to visit the **MASP** (Museu de Arte de São Paulo) art museum. One of the better collections in Brazil, the MASP has works by Van Gogh, Rembrandt, Monet, Renoir and Portinari. It is on Avenida Paulista 1578 at the Praça do Patriarca (☎ 11-3251-5644), and opens from 11 am-6 pm Tuesday through Sunday.

Check out the adjacent **Parque Trianon**, which has some original Atlantic rainforest vestiges at Rua Peixoto Gomide, 949 (☎ 11-3289-2160). The park is open Wednesdays, Sundays and holidays from 9 am-5 pm.

If you walk down Paulista and turn right on Avenida Vergueiro, there is the **Museu Paulista**, which honors Brazilian independence, on Praça da Independência at Avenida Nazaré, no number (☎ 11-3273-7250). Open Tuesday through Sunday 9 am-4:45 pm.

A popular stop is the **Instituto Butantan**, which houses one of Latin America's most important exhibits of snakes, spiders and other creepy crawlies. The snakes are fed on Monday, which draws a crowd. On-site is a museum dedicated to the history of biology. It is at Avenida Dr Vital Brasil, 1500 in Butantã (a bit distant from the park but in the same general area). Open Tuesday thorugh Sunday from 9 am-4:30 pm (☎ 11-3726-7222).

MASP museum

Chorinho, Snacks & Antiques at the Praça Benedito Calixto

Every weekend there is a fair at the Praça Benedito Calixto in the upscale neighborhood of Pinheiros. What started out as a tiny fair for street merchants in the 1980s has slowly evolved into one of the city's most enjoyable cultural options. Here musicians gather to play the Brazilian musical style known as chorinho (something akin to samba with a rapid scale). Every Saturday from 9 am-7 pm several hundred street merchants selling books, clothes, antiques, arts, crafts, and food fill up the tiny square in an event where some people go to relax all day. The chorinho begins around 2:30 pm and the sound fills the entire square. There are tin tables and typical Brazilian snacks for sale, such as pasteis and even the Bahian treat, acarajé, made with shrimp and fried bean paste. It is a cheap, laid-back affair with a noisy and welcoming crowd of all ages. A more recent development is the Autor da Praça project, which has events with Brazilian writers and artists, some quite well known. Sometimes there are other musical presentations at the end of the fair, such as choral singing, but the real star of the show is the chorinho. The fair is between the streets Cardeal Arcoverde and Teodore Sampaio in front of the Igreja do Calvário church. Right around the square are some good restaurants, especially the **Consulado Mineiro** ($$), which serves traditional Minas Gerais cooking. You might also drop in at the Espaço Cultural Alberico Rodrigues on the square, which has books and expositions.

Adventures in the Air

To see São Paulo from the sky, you can take scenic helicopter trips that can range from $350 to $2,500 per hour. **Airshop**, ☎ 11-6221-0144; **Álamo Táxi Aéreo**, ☎ 11-6221-6644, and **Global Táxi Aéreo**, ☎ 0800-55-5684, all provide this service.

Cultural Adventures

The **Liberdade** neighborhood, inhabited primarily by Japanese immigrants from the post-WWII period, is an interesting place to explore. On Sundays especially there is an open-air market right outside the Liberdade subway stop. All the street signs are in Japanese. It's not very big, so you can see everything in a few hours, and there are plenty of shops and Asian food markets to explore on Rua Galvão Bueno, Conselheiro Furtado or Rua da Glória.

There are also good restaurants serving Japanese, Korean and Chinese food, especially around Rua Tomás Antônio Gonzaga. One of the best known for fresh sushi is **Sushi Yassu** ($$$) on Rua Tomás Gonzaga 98, which serves lunch and dinner (☎ 11-3209-6622).

The headquarters in South America of the Soto Zen school is at the **Templo Busshinji** on Rua São Joaquim, 285 (☎ 11-3208-4515), which has events and classes such as floral arrangement open to the public. There is a museum dedicated to Japanese immigration to Brazil called **Museu Histórico da Imigração Japonesa no Brasil**, on Rua São Joaquim, 381 (7th, 8th and 9th floors), open Tuesday through Sunday from 1:30 to 5:30 pm (☎ 11-3209-5465).

Bela Vista, or "Bixiga," is the Italian neighborhood and an excellent place to go to eat. Many newsstand operators in São Paulo are traditionally from Italian immigrant families, especially in Bela Vista and, if you speak a little Italian, chatting them up is a great way to get some information on the local neighborhood, as they know everyone and everything.

This section of town is a bit "touristy" these days, but some of the original feel of the area still remains. The neighborhood has a street fair on Sundays and in August there is a popular religious festival commemorating Nossa Senhora Achiropita in front of the church of the same name on Rua Treze de Maio, 478 (☎ 11-3283-1294). Stalls open up outside the church serving traditional Italian snacks and the many local trattorias on the same street, or "cantinas" in the local dialect, go to extremes to please their customers with live music and festival décor. Try **Roperto** ($$), a noisy, wood-paneled eatery from the 1940s on Rua Treze de Maio, 634, open for lunch or dinner (☎ 11-3288-2573).

If you prefer pizza try the **Speranza** ($$), which has been there since the 1950s. There are often lines to get in, so the best time to go is around 6 pm when it opens, at Rua Treze de Maio, 1004 (☎ 11-3288-8502).

Musical Adventures

Teatro Municipal

São Paulo has a firm tradition of elegant classical music. The municipal symphonic orchestra has concerts at the **Sala de Concertos São Paulo** on Praça Julio Prestes (☎ 11-223-5199) near the Luz subway stop. The municipal theater, **Teatro Municipal**, is another option for opera, ballet and recitals. It is at Praça Ramos de Azevedo (☎ 11-223-3022). Note that both neighborhoods are not great and you should stick close to the crowds.

Adventures at the Municipal Market

Built starting in 1928, the Mercado Municipal is a cultural and historic landmark of São Paulo. While it has all the hubbub of street commerce where people wander through the aisles of stalls selecting fruit, dairy, meats or spices, the natural illumination and stained glass with Neo-Classic architecture gives it a one-of-a-kind atmosphere. Close to 14,000 people visit every day, especially on Saturday. Have a snack in a casual dining area. Open 6 am to 6 pm, but it closes at 4 pm on Sunday and holidays. It is on Rua da Cantareira, 306 in the neighborhood called Parque Dom Pedro II in the Centro.

Where to Eat

Dining out is one of the great virtues of São Paulo, rivaling New York or London. The best restaurants in the country are found here, many with prices to match their reputation. However, eating well does not need to be expensive and you have a lot of choices. There are some "typical" paulistano specialities like pizza that are not to be missed, but it would be impossible to list more than just a sampling of the many fantastic restaurants. Check out the periodicals listed in this chapter (see *For More Information*) for other suggestions, as places open and close all the time. Credit cards are generally accepted at these establishments. Most of the restaurants listed here also have websites. Reservations at the finer places are a good idea.

Bahian

Bargaço ($$$) is the best Bahian restaurant in town, serving moquecas (fish stew, but they even have a vegetarian version!). It is in Jardim Paulista on Rua Oscar Freire, 1189. Open every day for dinner and every day but Monday for lunch (☎ 11-3085-5058).

Chinese

One of the best is casual **Hi Pin Shan** ($$), serving specialties of eastern and northern China since 1984 on Rua Doutor Ivo Define Frasca, 95, in Vila Olímpia. Open for lunch and dinner every day but Monday (☎ 11-3845-7167).

Contemporary & International

D.O.M. ($$$$$) is one of São Paulo's finest restaurants, with an award-winning chef. Reservations are recommended. Open for lunch and dinner through the week and dinner on Saturday at Rua Barão de Capanama, 549 (☎ 11-3088-0761).

Caipim Santo ($$$$) is a cool and trendy garden restaurant with an excellent buffet, perfect for a weekend lunch. Closed on Sunday. Alameda Ministro Rocha Azevedo in the Jardins (☎ 11-3068-8578).

The ultra-creative **Cantaloup** ($$$$) is another hit with Paulistanos and is one of the more sophisticated dining experiences in town, on Rua Manuel Guedes, 474 in Itaim Bibi. Opens for lunch and dinner during the week, dinner on Saturday and lunch on Sunday to 5:30 pm (☎ 11-3078-3445).

Cantaloup

French

Laurent ($$$$$) is one of the better-known French restaurants, with a bold mix of continental styles, South American flavors and occasional thematic dinners. Alameda Lorena, 1899, in Jardim Paulista (☎ 11-3887-0170).

The elegant **Parigi** ($$$$$) is also one of the best in town, serving French and Italian cuisine with one of the best wine lists in São Paulo. Rua Amauri, 257, in Jardim Europa (☎ 11-3167-1575 or 3167-2560).

An eclectic and homey place for lunch and dinner is the Paulistano-French bistro **Le Vin** ($$$), on Alameda Tietê, 184, in Jardim Paulista (☎ 11-3081-3924).

For savory crêpes after visting the Trianon-Masp, **Ça-Va** ($$) is close to the Trianon-Masp metro station on Rua Carlos Comenale, 277. Open every day but Sunday for lunch and only dinner on Saturday (☎ 11-3285-4548).

German

Die Meister Stube ($$$) on Rua Barão do Triunfo, 1213, in Campo Belo, is reasonably priced and has a very good reputation. Open daily for lunch and dinner (☎ 11-5536-4982).

The **Windhuk** ($$$), on Alameda dos Arapanés, 1400, in Moema, is a little more upscale (☎ 11-5044-2040).

Italian

Gero ($$$$$) is a trendy place with fine dining and a busy bar at Rua Haddock Lobo, 1629. It is run by the same owner as Parigi, which also serves excellent Italian cuisine – see French cuisine above (☎ 11-3064-0005).

Emporio Ravioli ($$$$) caters to the executive crowd with an excellent lunch at Rua Ramos Batista, 390, in Vila Olimpia (☎ 11-3846-2908).

Roperto ($$), in the “Bixiga” neighborhood, formally known as Bela Vista, is an excellent “cantina” on Rua Treze de Maio, 634, open for lunch or dinner (☎ 11-3288-2573).

Or you might try **Famiglia Mancini** ($$$) on Rua Avanhandava, 81, nearby in Bela Vista (☎ 11-3256-4320).

Japanese

One of the best in town, the chef of **Jun Sakamoto** ($$$$$) was trained in New York and prepares very fresh contemporary and traditional sushi in an upscale location at Rua Lisboa, 55, in Pinheiros (☎ 11-3088-6019).

The **Kinoshita** ($$$$) is simpler but also one of the best, at Rua da Gloria 168 in Liberdade, which opens for lunch and dinner (☎ 11-3105-4903).

Sushi Yassu ($$$) is also in Liberdade close to the subway stop at Rua Tomás Gonzaga, 98, open for lunch and dinner every day but Monday (☎ 11-3209-6622).

Northeastern

Restaurante Andrade ($$) mixes great Northeastern Brazilian style food with live forró music and dancing (Tuesday through Saturday at night and Sunday for lunch) in a fun and casual setting for all ages. R. Arthur de Azevado, 874 - Pinheiros São Paulo - SP (☎ 11-3085-0589).

Middle Eastern

One of the best known among many good Middle Eastern restaurants is the **Arábia** ($$$), on Rua Haddock Lobo, 1397, in Jardim Paulista (☎ 11-3064-4776).

The **Khayyan** ($$$) is also good at Rua Oliveira Dias, 4444, in Jardim Paulistano (☎ 11-3884-8868).

Minas Gerais

Consulado Mineiro ($$) has great food and a casual crowd on Praça Benedito Calixto, 74, in Pinheiros. Open every day for lunch and dinner but the best day to go is Saturday when there is a street fair in front (☎ 11-3088-6055).

Pizza

Speranza ($$) in the Italian neighborhood of Bela Vista is a Paulistano legend. There are generally lines to get in, so get there early, around 6 pm when it opens, at Rua Treze de Maio, 1004 (☎ 11-3288-8502).

Bráz Pizzaria ($$) also has long lines but it's worth the wait for pizza, great appetizers and ice cold chopp at Rua Vupabuçu, 271, in Pinheiros. Open at night. (☎ 11-3037-7973).

Primo Basílico ($$) gets just as crowded. In Jardim Paulistano on Alameda Gabriel Monteiro da Silva, 1864. Open at night (☎ 11-3082-8027).

Mariana Pizza ($$) in Vila Mariana has dozens of options, open Tuesday through Sunday at Rua Joaquim Távora 1195 (☎ 11-5573-0730).

Portuguese

A Casota

The Antiquarius ($$$$$) is an eatery of the elite decorated with fine arts on Alameda Lorena 1884 in Jardim Paulista. The food is simple, though expertly presented. (☎ 11-3082-3015).

A Casota ($$$) on Rua Douto, Alceu de Campos Rodrigues 527 in Itaim Bibi, is just as famous and has more reasonable prices (☎ 11-3044-2906).

Another favorite among Paulistanos is **A Bela Sintra** ($$$) on Rua Bela Cintra 2325 in Jardim Paulista, an elegant place open every day (☎ 3891-0740).

Seafood

At simple but famous **Rufino's Restaurant** ($$$), you choose your fish on display, served baked, grilled or with pasta in a variety of delicious ways. Open every day for lunch and dinner at Rua Doutor Mário Ferraz 377 in Chácara Itaim (☎ 11-3078-6301).

Spanish

The Toro ($$$$) is one of the best in the city with an open-air dining area at Rua Joaquim Antunes in Jardim Paulistano. Open for lunch and dinner (from 8 pm) Monday through Saturday and lunch on Sunday (☎ 11-3085-8485).

Don Curro ($$$$$) in Pinheiros on Rua Alves Guimaraes is pricey but worth it. Paella is the house specialty. Open every day but Monday (☎ 11-3062-4712).

Steakhouses

Arguably the best churrascaria (all you can eat-style where the meats are brought on swords to your table) is **Fogo de Chão** ($$$$) on Avenida

Moreira Guimaraes in Moema. Open every day for lunch and dinner (☎ 11-5056-1795).

Baby Beef Rubaiyat

For excellent steak à la carte, arguably the best in town, is the **Baby Beef Rubaiyat** ($$$$) on Alameda Santos 86 in Jardim Paulistano (☎ 11-3289-6366), or on Avenida Bridadeiro Faria Lima 2954 in Itaim Bibi (☎ 11-3078-9488).

The **Veranda Grill** ($$$) is chic and popular, as well as a bit more affordable, at Rua General Mena Barreto 793 in Jardim Paulista (☎ 11-3887-8870). Reservations are a good idea.

Try **Martinn Fierro** ($$) on Rua Aspicuelta 683 in the fun Vila Madalena neighborhood, which also has excellent Argentine steak as well as empañadas (☎ 11-3814-6747). It is busiest during the week for lunch and dinner and closes at 5:30 pm on Saturdays (closed all day Sunday).

The **Spinnaker Steak House** ($$) is an American-style steak house that also serves Tex-Mex daily for lunch and dinenr at Avenda Nove de Julho 5872 in Jardim Europa (☎ 11-3064-1009).

Nightlife

One of the best things about São Paulo is the nightlife. Paulistanos work hard and play hard, and it is not uncommon for the more popular places to fill up until the wee hours even on weeknights. Don't be surprised by hefty cover charges at some of the better establishments – prices are comparable to other major cities of the world.

Sometimes the cover charge is labeled "consumo," which means you won't have to pay up to that amount so you might as well use it up, but the "couver artístico" is a standard cover charge. Some places are going high-tech where your bill is calculated electronically on a plastic card they give you when you go in.

A lot of professionals go out dancing after work and, with the famous Paulistano taste for fashion, people tend to dress up to go out. Some of the more popular clubs can be annoyingly hard to get into, with the best dressed or best looking getting preference – that said, jeans are almost always okay and for some reason Paulistanos like to dress in black. Being a foreigner may help if you try to chat up the door manager a little bit.

The bars and clubs in Pinheiros and Vila Madelena are a lot less snobby.

The São Paulo night crowd is notoriously fickle, and places open and close sometimes with amazing speed. It is strongly advised to check out the listings in the local papers or do a quick search on the Internet for what's hot when you are in town. The establishments listed here are some of the survivors or fairly new ones that look as if they'll last.

You may want to simply take a taxi to the neighborhoods where bars and nightclubs are concentrated, like Vila Madalena and Pinheiros. There are so many that crowds form on the streets on the weekends, and you can just wander to find one you like or simply enjoy the crowds outdoors.

There are zones with better restaurants, bars and clubs, like Vila Olímpia, Moema, or Itaim Bibi in the Jardins area, though they tend to be a bit more spread out and you are probably better off having a few ideas beforehand from this list or the local papers.

Paulistanos shed their formalities at night and the crowds are usually more friendly than other major cities in Brazil. You may notice that the city's nightlife has a tendency for gay and straight crowds to mix. Also, each of the "hip" locales likes to differentiate itself somehow and a lot of the clubs can be pretty weird inside.

In recent years there has been a trend toward adopting the American-style pay-per-drink system in São Paulo. You are now likely to be given a card to mark what you consume and pay at the end of the night. Don't lose that card or you'll have to pay an exorbitant surcharge!

Skye Bar is a stylish and pricey bar and dance club with a great terrace and chic drinks in the Hotel Unique, but the crowd always includes plenty of locals. It is on Avenida Brigadeiro Luís Antônio 4700 (☎ 11-3055-4702).

Heaven on Rua Amauri 244 in the Jardins is an upscale nightclub with dancing and crowd filled with aspiring models (the proprietor used to manage a modeling agency), though it can be hard to get in (☎ 11-3071-3901).

Café de la Musique

Café de la Musique in Itaim Bibi was launched by São Paulo's top club and restaurant proprietors with stylish lounges, dancing and fine dining for a mature and monied crowd. The staff speaks English, and reservations are recommended – it is at Avenida Jucelino Kubitschek 1400 (on the corner with Rua Miriti) in Itaim Bibi (☎ 11-3079-5588).

Dolores Dolores is a landmark bar and club in Vila Madelena with a young, unpretentious and eclectic crowd that favors hip-hop. Rua Fradique Coutinho, 1007.

Grazie a Dio is a crowded spot with live music and food featuring established and up-and-coming bands playing samba, salsa, jazz and rock with a DJ later. Rua Girassol 67 in Vila Madalena (☎ 11-3031-6568).

Rey Castro is a very cool retro, Cuban-themed restaurant and bar with Latin jazz, merengue, salsa and Latin pop with live music and DJs. At Jesuino Cardoso, 181, in Vila Olímpia. On Wednesdays you can get a free class in Latin dancing if you make reservations before 6 pm (☎ 11-3044-4383).

Filial, an informal botequim-style bar in Vila Madelena, is where to go for a snack, beer or loud conversation when practically everything else is winding down for the night. Rua Fidalga, 254 (☎ 11-3813-9226).

Blen Blen in Pinheiros is a good bar and club in Pinheiros with an ever-changing line-up of musical styles. Rua Inácio Pereira da Rocha, 520 (☎ 11 3815-4999).

Pirajá in Pinheiros is a great informal bar styled like a Rio de Janeiro botequim where you can have cold beer and snacks in a fun crowd. It is at Avenida Brigadeiro Faria Lima, 64, in Pinheiros (☎ 11-3815-6881).

Universidade de Cachaça is where to go if you want to try Brazilian cane liquor in its various incarnations. But be careful, the stuff is potent! The food and snacks are first-rate and will line your stomach. It's at Rua Iaiá, 83, in Itaím (☎ 11-3167-0461).

For other informal "gringo bars" where you can meet up with travelers and ex-pats, check out the popular Irish pubs in town. **Dublin** at Rua Ministro Jesuíno Cardoso, 178, in Vila Olímpia, has live music and lively crowds with pub food and drinks (☎ 11-3044-4194). **Finnegans** is another rowdy gringo landmark in the city serving good food and drinks on Rua Cristiano Vianna, 358, in Pinheiros (☎ 11-3062-3232). **All Black Irish Pub** is the newest and one of the best at Oscar Freire, 163, in the Jardins (☎ 11 3088-7990).

Where to Stay

Lodging caters to business travelers in São Paulo and can be fairly expensive but there is plenty available. It never hurts to bargain for a discount. Here are suggestions for some of the better hotels, generally accepting online reservations:

Unique ($$$$$) is a chic, futuristic-looking hotel shaped like an arc at Avenida Brigadeiro Luis Antonio, 4700, near Ibirapuera

Hotel Unique

park. There are good restaurants and bars nearby (☎ 11-3055-4710).

L'Hotel ($$$$$) is classic and elegant, considered one of the finest in town for its innovative services. Alameda Campinas in Bela Vista at 266 Jardim Paulista (www.lhotel.com.br)

Hotel Maksoud Plaza ($$$$$) is traditionally considered one of the best hotels at Alameda Campinas. 150. in Bela Vista (☎ 11-3145-8000 or 253-4411; www.maksoud.com.br.).

A room in the Fasano

Fasano ($$$$$) is another trendy upscale hotel with nearby restaurants and bars at Rua Vitório Fasano, 88, in the Jardins (☎ 11-3896-4000).

Grand Hotel Mercure ($$$) is at Rua Joinville, 515, in Vila Mariana, reasonably close to the nightlife (☎ 11-5088-4000; www.accor.com.br).

Golden Tulip Paulista Plaza ($$$) is a full-service hotel at Alameda Santos, 85, in Paraíso (☎ 11-3177-0400; www.paulistaplaza.com.br).

Blue Tree Towers Nações Unidas ($$$) on Rua Fernandes Moreira, 1371, is a nice full-service hotel (☎ 11-5189-6555; www.bluetree.com.br).

Comfort Suítes Oscar Freire ($$$) is reasonably priced at Rua Oscar Freire 1948 in Jardim Paulista, part of the Jardins (☎ 11-3896-0300) www.atlântica-hotels.com R$ 250

Mercure São Paulo Jardins ($$$) is at Alameda Itu, 1151, in the Jardins (☎ 11-3089-7555; www.accor.com.br).

Estanplaza Paulista ($$$), at Alameda Jaú, 497, is also in the Jardins and a little less expensive than some of the others nearby (☎ 11-3016-0000; www.estanplaza.com.br).

Ibis São Paulo Congonhas ($$), on Rua Bsa. de Bela Vista, 801, in Jardim Congonhas, is a simple hotel close to Congonhas airport (☎ 11-5097-3737; www.accor.com.br.

Formule 1 ($) is a racing-themed budget hotel that will save you money. Near Avenida Paulista.

Lobby of the Estanplaza Paulista

What to Buy

Given the overall sophistication and urbanity of São Paulo, it is not surprising that shopping centers are the best places to look. Prices are close to those in other major cities around the world but you can find good bargains if you look.

The best buys tend to be leather goods (shoes, belts, and handbags), local perfumes, high-quality precious stones, innovative household décor and clothes (particularly for women). There has also been in recent years a trend toward rustic arts and crafts sold in specialty stores at the shopping centers, but the prices are marked way up (though still cheaper than the airport stores). Imported items are overpriced because of hefty trade duties.

You might want to browse the huge **Municipal Market** (Mercado Municipal), a cultural landmark where you can also have a bite to eat on Rua da Cantareira, 306, in the Centro. You can buy hand-made products and curiosities to take home. You may not be able to get the foodstuffs through customs back home but you can certainly have a taste while you're here. **Charutaria Bruno**, Rua E, Box 12 (☎ 11-228-3191), sells all kinds of Brazilian tobacco and cigars. For more information see *Adventures* above.

Shopping Iguatemi on Avenida Brigadeiro Faria Lima, 2232 (☎ 11-3038-6000) is the largest and oldest shopping center in São Paulo, and perhaps the best for all kinds of purchases. Any taxi driver can take you there. **Shopping Pátio Higienópolis**, on Avenida Higienópolis, 618 (☎ 11-3823-2300), is another upscale shopping center. Or you can try **Shopping Ibirapuera** on Avenida Ibirapuera, 3103 (☎ 11-5095-2300).

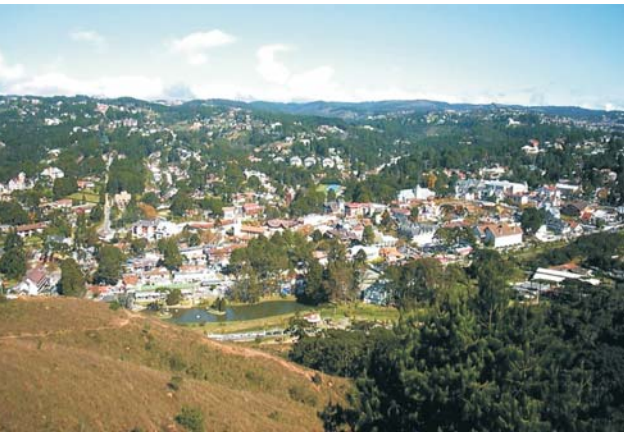
Iguatemi

Also downtown in the Centro are the many cheap and crowded shops of **Rua 25 de Março**, a commercial street closed to cars, which fills up with 500,000 people a day! This is a great way to check out daily life in São Paulo as you are looking around downtown. There are plenty of juice bars and things to see, but be careful for pickpockets.

Side-Trips

Campos do Jordão

A traditional getaway for well-heeled Paulistanos, **Campos do Jordão** is a charming and expensive tourist town. It's just 90 miles/150 km from São Paulo. To get there take Rodovia Presidente Dutra (BR 116) toward Rio de Janeiro, then State Highway SP 123 after Caçapava to Campos do Jordão. It is probably easier to take a bus as the trip is only about



three hours, and there are several running there and back daily for under $20.

In the wooded Mantiqueira mountains, the town is styled loosely after an artificial Swiss villa, with generally high-quality guest houses and restaurants, and a penchant for equestrian sports. During the winter it can be especially chilly up here in the mountains, though it averages a cool 13°C (56°F) – you will want a light jacket for the evenings, at least in the summer and during the winter for sure.

Vila Capivari

There are three main centers of town, including Vila Jaguaribe, Vila Capivari and Vila Abernessia, but **Vila Capivari** is the main one for tourism (the bus station is in Vila Jaguaribe). Here you can find trails and hikes into the native pine forest of the Horto Florestal section of the Campos do Jordão State Park (☎ 12-3263-3762) about six miles/10 km away. In town one suggestion is to take the **red trollies** (A-5, A-6 and A-7), which leave from Capivari toward the São Cristovão station on a scenic trip around the three vilas. It takes less than an hour. Or you can simply wander around and look at the sights or browse the botiques. You can get general information and maps, as well as suggestions about where to rent bikes or horses, in the tour office at the entrance to town, called Portal da Cidade (☎ 12-3664-2535). There are plenty of options for lodging, such as the **Hotel Frontenac** on Avenida Doutor Paulo Ribas, 295, in Capivari (☎ 12-3669-1000) or **Pousada da Lua** on Rua Benigno Ribeiro, 424, at Morro do Elefante in Capivari (☎ 12-3663-2934).

Brotas

Brotas is the closest place to São Paulo for adventure sports such as rafting, canoeing, hiking or rappel. Practically unknown a decade ago except by local outdoor sports enthusiasts, Brotas is turning into an important destination in the state. Unfortunately there have been some accidents here because of rank amateurs working as travel guides in the recent past and while a trip is definitely worthwhile, you should only trust your money and your life with qualified outfitters – use your judgement and don't bite at the first trip offered, especially when someone approaches you on the street.

Rafting in Brotas

The region is about 150 miles/250 km from São Paulo. To drive, take the Rodovia Anhanguera to Km 153, turn right toward Rio Claro on Rodovia Washington Luis until the 206B Km marker, then turn right and follow Highway SP 225 for about 24 miles/40 km to Brotas. There are three bus departures every day on the Expresso Prata line from São Paulo, arriving at the bus station (☎ 14-3653-1538) in Brotas. Accommodations and restaurants here range from simple to spartan, but that's not bad since you will be spending most of your time outdoors. Even so, during the weekends and holidays especially you should make reservations, as the region is starting to make a name for itself. The municipal tour board and **Centro Cultural office** can provide information, at Avenida Mario Pinotto, 584 (☎ 14-3563-1122). There are several outfitters in town, such as **Brotas Aventura**, Avenida Mario Pinotti, 113 (☎ 14-3653-8000). For lodging try **Pousada do Sol**, Avenida Mario Pinotti ,1400 (☎ 14-3653-2016), **Pousada Caminho das Águas**, Avenida Mario Pinotti, 1110 (☎ 14-3653-2428), or **Mirágua Refúgios Pousada**, Avenida Rodolpho Guimarães, 94 (☎ 14-3653-8086). To eat, the **Restaurante Malagueta** is one of several options, on Avenida Mario Pinotti, 243 (☎ 14-3653-5491).

The Paulista Coast

Santos, Guarujá, São Sebastião, Ilha Bela & Ubatuba

- Coastal highway with crowded getaways
- Go diving in the emerald waters of the South Atlantic
- Hot nightlife in the summer months and on weekends

The region called the Litoral Paulista, or Paulista Coast, extends from the port city of Santos all the way to the beach resort of Ubatuba. It is here among the beaches, summer homes, luxury condos and forested areas that the hard-working Paulistanos take a break from it all. The beaches are clean and very beautiful and, despite the large numbers of people (especially during the Brazilian summer), the towns of the coast

still manage to maintain their rusticity. The resort areas are dotted all along the coast a short distance from one another. The region is easily accessible by car or bus from the capital and makes a worthwhile trip, especially for people on extended stays in São Paulo. Each of the main towns in this section is well supplied with restaurants, places to stay, travel agencies and other basic services – though most tend to be very seasonal.

The area called Baixada Santista is the section of the coast that extends from Santos to Bertioga. **Santos** is the largest port in Latin America and, apart from a certain scenic beauty (especially when compared to the ugliness of the capital) and some historic landmarks, it is urban and crowded, mostly frequented by weekenders from Sampa. To the north of Santos is the city of **Guarujá**, a resort area with wide urban beaches. At the outer limit is **Bertioga**, at the entrance to the Bertioga channel, which separates it from Guarujá, a historic villa with a Portuguese fortress dating back to 1532. From here to São Sebastião it's called the Southern Coast (Litoral Sul). While these areas are pleasant, you are really better off traveling onward to the resort towns of **São Sebastião**, **Ilha Bela**, or **Ubatuba**, which are farther from Santos.

The Northern Coast (Litoral Norte) is the section that extends from São Sebastião to Ubatuba. In São Sebastião there are some nice beaches such as Maresias and Calhetas, which tend to be fairly crowded during the summer, or Juquehy and Barra do Una which are a bit more secluded. Twenty minutes away by ferry is Ilha Bela (the "beautiful island") which has dozens of shipwrecks and a tranquil setting, where you can get away from it all (except, of course, for the crowds from São Paulo with the same idea). Ubatuba, which is on the border with Rio de Janeiro, is the most beautiful of them all and has plenty of options for leisure and relaxation.

Bertioga

How to Get Here

If you are up to the drive from São Paulo, which can be pretty hectic in the city, once you get outside the urban perimeter, the roads are not so bad. Along the coast, it is considered one of the nicest coastal highways in Brazil. Having a car will go a long way toward making your trip more enjoyable on the Paulista Coast, allowing you to explore different beaches and go from city to city as you choose.

One option is to take a bus to Santos then rent a car to explore the coast, avoiding the traffic in São Paulo altogether. Keep in mind that you do need to watch out for imprudent drivers, especially on holidays and weekends anywhere along the coast during the Brazilian summer. There is sometimes fog along the coast as well.

The best car rental company in my experience is **Localiza**, on Avenida Ana Costa, 304, in the Centro of Santos (☎ 13-3223-3432), and they accept reservations online.

By car from São Paulo, take Federal Highway BR 101 (Rio-Santos). Santos is about 42 miles/70 km away, with various entry points along the Imigrantes and Anchieta highway system. As you approach the coast and descend from the highlands on BR 101 toward Rio, there are signs for all the cities of the coast all the way to Ubatuba, about 141 miles/235 km from São Paulo. Basically, once in Santos, your main point of reference is this very same Rio-Santos coastal highway (which travels inland near Santos), SP 055, all the way to Ubatuba, or if you want, Paraty and the coast of Rio de Janeiro, just on the other side of the state border about 42 miles/70 km away.

To get to Bertioga and Riviera de São Lorenço from São Paulo, you can take the Mogi-Bertioga State Highway SP 098, or a ferry boat from Guarujá.

You can also take the Via Dutra Highway from São Paulo to São Sebastião, Caraguatatuba and Ubatuba by driving the Rodovia dos Trabalhadores State Highway SP 170, then Rodovia Carvalho Pinto to São José dos Campos, then Rodovia dos Tamoios SP 99 to Caraguatatuba, where you can take the Rodovia Rio-Santos BR 101 toward São Paulo, to get to São Sebastião, or toward Rio to reach Ubatuba.

By car from Rio de Janeiro, you can reachUbatuba along the Rio-Santos (here called BR 101) or on the Rodovia Presidente Dutra. From Paraty (see the *Green Coast* chapter in Rio de Janeiro), continue along BR 101 toward São Paulo. At Ubatuba BR 101, turn into State Highway SP 055 toward Santos, per the directions above.

If you don't want to drive, there are several **bus** lines from the Tietê Terminal in São Paulo with departures all day for the coast. This is a cheap, safe and efficient way to go since the maximum cost will be about $20, and most buses have air-conditioning. To Guarujá, inquire at **Rapido**

Brasil (☎ 11-5011-3421), **Expresso Brasileiro** (☎ 11-5012-0210) or **Ultra** (☎ **11-5011-3421**). For the other cities, try **Viação Litorânea** (☎ 11-6221 0244) or **Reunidas** (☎ 11-6221-8811 and 0800-177200 in Brazil).

You can also get here from Rio by bus. **Normandy** (☎ 21-2209-9600) runs between Rio and Santos and Rio and São Sebastião, leaving from the Rodoviária Novo Rio bus station (see *Rio de Janeiro* for details).

To get to Ilha Bela, you need to take a short ferry ride from São Sebastião, which costs a few dollars. The boats leave at regular intervals during daylight hours. Contact **Dersa** (☎ 0800-55-5510 or 13-3892-1576).

When to Go

The Brazilian summer is the best time to enjoy the beaches, from October to around March, when it is hot and sometimes rainy. During weekends and holidays, the entire region fills up and there can be a lot of traffic and crowds. So it is generally a good idea to make reservations before you go. Typically people spend from two or three days in any one of these destinations, but you could make a week of it or more just by wandering the coast. Some people end up spending years!

For More Information

The region is very well traveled, and it's not hard to find local outfitters, depending on the types of activities you are looking for, and prices don't seem to vary that much. Prices in general tend to be a bit higher than the national average, due to its location close to affluent São Paulo. The best outfitters tend to have offices in the main parts of town noted below, and they are also a good resource to find out what's happening when you are there. Each of the towns listed also has a tourist information hotline that can be very helpful once you have arrived. Also, there are dozens of small Internet sites for each of the towns that provide photos and other travel advice, though most are pretty limited or in Portuguese. They can be helpful in deciding where to go, providing information on local events, weather conditions, and other details.

Adventures in Santos

Santos is the largest coastal city and has the most to see and do, but lacks some of the charm of the cities farther on. The advantage of Santos is that it is a short distance from São Pablo, making it possible to get to a beach without great effort. Contact the **Tourism Secretariat** (SETUR) with any questions (☎ 13-3219-9081 or 0800-173887).

City of Santos

One of the best ways to see the city is on a short boat excursion along the coast. **Nova Bertioga** (☎ 13-3317-1848) and **Genesis Gemini** (☎ 13-3567-2070) both operate inexpensive boat excursions from Santos. Another sightseeing trip is offered by the **Linha Turística Conheça Santos** (☎ 0800-173887), which has a bilingual guide and stops at the main points in the city for a couple of dollars. The guided tour is from 9-11:30 am or 2-4:30 pm. You just show up at Praça das Bandeiras in Gonzaga and buy your ticket from the driver. Along the way you will see the historic landmarks of the city, such as the Orchid Gardens, historic churches, cultural centers, the city aquarium, and the largest urban park along the coast called Pinacoteca Benedito Calixto. You might also want to try the **Linha Turística do Bonde** (☎ 13-3219-9081), which is a short trolly ride costing under a dollar that runs from the Praça Mauá in the Centro for about 15 minutes, stopping at the historic district with a guide. It runs from Tuesday through Sunday at 11 am-5 pm.

For scuba diving, there is the **Laje de Santos Marine Park** (Parque Estadual Marinho de Laje de Santos) about an hour off the coast. Visibility is 30-60 feet. with a reasonable amount of marine life including dolphins and sea turtles. There is a list of dive operators at the park offices on Avenida Bartolomeu de Gusmão 192 at Ponta da Praia (☎ 13-3261-3445), including **Centralmar** (☎ 13-3567-2109) or **Cachalote** (☎ 13-3239-7213), but these outfitters may not speak English. You should call ahead to determine conditions for diving.

★Adventures in Guarujá

Guarujá is on an island about nine miles/15 km from Santos to the east, plus a short ferry ride at the end of the Santista Highway, or over a bridge along the Piaçaguera-Guarujá Highway. Note that it is not unusual to wait hours to get on the ferry during the busy season! One of the more popular destinations, here you will find good facilities, hotels and restaurants that get so crowded during the weekends and holidays that you might consider heading farther on.

Enseada beach

In the Centro, there are two beaches, **Pitangueiras** and **Enseada**, both of which have bars and restaurants. The beach and the nightlife are the main attractions, but you might want to stop in at the **Acqua Mundo**, said to be one of the largest aquariums in South America at Avenida Miguel Stefano 2001 (☎ 13-3351-8793). There are lots of nice beaches not far from town as well, but you will have to hike there on trails. Get more information from the local tour board (☎ 13-3387-7199). About 12 miles/20 km in the direction of Rio de Janeiro on the other side of a canal is **Bertioga**, where the 16th-century **Forte de São João** is on Enseada beach.

★Adventures in São Sebastião

Boiçucanga

São Sebastião sprawls along 60 miles/100 km of coastline with numerous beaches, and surrounded by a state park called **Parque Estadual da Serra do Mar e Oceano Atlântico**, which has trails and waterfalls to explore. Basically, just a long extension of Guarujá and Bertioga, the region here is well developed to receive visitors, with plenty of places to stay, eat and go out. Along the way are dozens of fine beaches for surfing or just hanging out– the most famous being **Maresias**, but you can find others easily. During July, typically an off-season, there is an international sailing competition hosted here and it gets very windy.

In the former fishing village of **Boiçucanga**, fast becoming its own city, there are the best restaurants and places to stay. Here there are trails through the forest, fresh water grottoes and waterfalls – **Ecodynamic** (☎ 12-3865-2545), which has offices nearby in adjacent **Camburi**, has half-day and full-day excursions that cost up to about $50. If you continue on to São Sebastião itself, there is a historic district with Colonial landmarks from the 17th and 18th centuries. There are some resorts here, as well as a busy nightlife. You can get information from the local tour board (☎ 13-3892-1808).

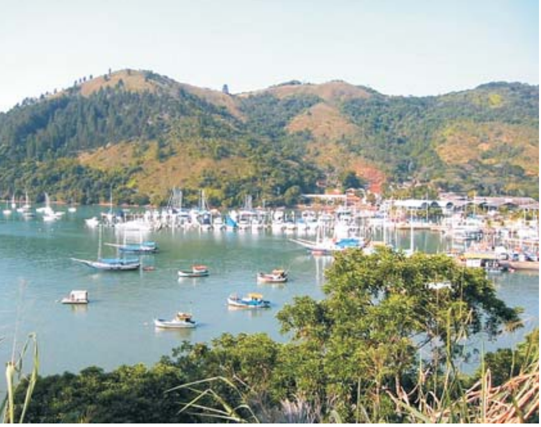
★Adventures in Ilha Bela

Ilha Bela has dozens of beaches and trails, and is one of the most popular destinations along the coast. To get here you need to take a ferry (*balsa*) over the channel from São Sebastião, which takes 15 minutes. In the summer, to avoid waiting all day you should make a reservation – it will cost more to do so (about $20 round-trip), but it saves time (☎ 0800-7045510). The same is true for lodging, you are strongly advised to make reservations. It was once a redoubt of pirates, and the locals on this tropical island are said to be their descendents. About 80% of mountainous Ilha Bela is a nature preserve and getting around can be a little difficult. Ilha Bela is a favorite spot for sailing, and the continental side of the island tends to fill up with boats and tourists. The seaward side of the island is rugged and less traveled, with no facilities, and getting there requires a professional guide with a jeep or motorboat. The beaches on the northeast side of the island (Jabaquara or Fome) are more secluded, while the nightlife is centered around Perequê and Saco de Capela, where the town is. There are various outfitters on the island offering diving, hikes, rappel, and boat excursions to the better beaches. They are recommended to make the most of your trip – the island is big and they know where to go. This is a good way to meet fellow travelers as well. You can also try windsurfing, sailing or kitesurfing – there are boards and laser class boats for rent and instructors at Avenida Permetral Norte 4260, on the beach called Armação.

Note that insect repellent is your friend anywhere on the island due to the fiendish mosquitos called *borrachudos*. You can get more information from the **Tourism Secretariat in town** (☎ 12-3896-2440).

★Adventures in Ubatuba

The 54-mile/90-km swath of coast that cuts through the Tropic of Capricorn is the most beautiful section of the Paulista Coast, and the most recommended for ocean lovers, if you don't mind the distance. The beaches closest to town are the busiest. If you head north a bit (toward Rio) the crowds tend to thin out. The nightlife is extremely seasonal here, perhaps because it is the farthest from São Paulo, and many of the bars and nightclubs that are packed with people during the Brazilian summer shut down during the winter. Most of the action is around the



Ubatuba

center of town, near the beaches called **Itaguá** and **Cruzeiro**, and this is where everybody seems to migrate at night. But you are better off heading out of town a bit to enjoy the beaches. The water is clear, with good sea life, perfect for scuba diving around the nearby islands. **Omnimare** (☎ 12-3832-2005) is a recommended PADI-certified dive center on Rua Guaicurus, 30, in Itaguá – a one-tank dive with full equipment costs around $75. You can also enjoy inexpensive half-day boat excursions on a schooner that leaves from Itaguá – get in touch with the outfitter **Myknonos Turismo** (☎ 12-3842-0329). As on the rest of the coast, there are also options for hikes and trekking though the Atlantic rainforest to historic ruins or a small indigenous settlement offered by the outfitters in the Centro.

Don't miss the sea-turtle preservation center run by **Projeto Tamar** (☎ 12-3832-6202), with exhibits and an aquarium to see these endangered creatures at Rua Antônio Athanasio da Silva 273 in Itaguá. Or you can stop by another interesting local acquarium called **Aquário de Ubatuba**, with samples of local marine life, at Rua Guarani, 859, in Itaguá. You can get more information about the local attractions and services from the tour board hotline (☎ 12-3833-9123).

Where to Stay

Prices tend to rise about 20% during the Brazilian summer months (and even more during Christmas and New Years Eve holidays), but in off-season you can try to bargain for a greater discount, especially farther up the coast because the demand is less. Typically, to make reservations, you have to make a deposit, which is non-refundable. Given the number of options for lodging, you can find a place to stay easily, but it may not be the most comfortable. Prices listed here are for high season.

Santos

The best place to stay is near Gonzaga beach, an upscale neighborhood where there are more restaurants, bars and places to shop.

Hotel Parque Balneário ($$$), on Avenida Ana Costa, 555, at Praia do Gonzaga, is a luxury hotel on the beach (☎ 13-3289-5700).

Mendes Plaza ($$-$$$) is almost as nice, on Avenida Floriano Peixoto, 42, about 50 yards from Praia do Gonzaga (☎ 13-3208-6500).

Hotel Atlântico ($$-$$$) is a 1932 Neo-Classic hotel in Gonzaga at Presidente Wilson, 1, with a beer hall downstairs facing the beach (☎ 13-3289-4500).

Guarujá

Guarujá has many good hotels but they are relatively expensive due to the constant demand.

Casa Grande ($$$$) is a luxury resort-style hotel and spa on the beach at Praia da Enseada (☎ 13-3389-4000).

Strand Hotel ($$-$$$) is a full-service resort hotel on the beach on Avenida Prestes Maia, 385, at Praia do Tombo (☎ 13-3354-2821).

Pousada Canto do Forte ($$), on Rua Horácio Guedes Barreiro, 133, is near Tombo beach (☎ 13-3354-2860).

Casa Grande

São Sebastião

The area called São Sebastião is spread out over a wide area. You may want to find a spot you like first and then search for a place to stay. **Boiçucanga** (adjacent to Camburi) is recommended for their restaurants and nightlife, but the nicer beaches are a little farther away. **Maresias**, with a lot of nightlife and a great beach, tends to get crowded.

Villa Bebek Hotel ($$$-$$$$) is a high-quality resort and spa for adults only, offering great value. It is in Camburi (next to Boiçucanga) on Rua Zezito, 251 (☎ 12-3865-3320).

Pousada Canto Verde ($), on Rua Manoel Nunes Passos, 200, in Boiçucanga, is not on the beach but is surrounded by the Atlantic rainforest and is an excellent choice (☎ 12-3865-3335).

Maresias Beach ($$-$$$$) is the nicest resort in Maresias and, as the name implies, right on the beach. Avenida Dr Francisco Loup, 1109 (☎ 12-3891-7500).

Hotel Mibamar ($$-$$$), in Maresias, is also comfortable and on the beach with full services. On Dr Francisco Loup ,1182 (☎ 12-3865-6404).

Vistabela Resort ($$$), in the Centro of São Sebastião, is on the beach at Praia de Barequeçaba with a view of Ilha Bela. The address is Rua Dr. Paulo Costa, 653 (☎ 12-3862-6703).

Balcony view from Vistabela Resort

Ilha Bela

Pousada Canto da Praia ($$$$) faces a secluded beach in a tropical paradise. Children under 16 are not allowed. Avenida Forccedila Expedicionária Brasileria, 793 (☎ 12-3896-1194).

Refúgio das Pedras

(visitilhabela.com)

Refúgio das Pedras ($$$) has secluded chalets for couples only in a very beautiful location on the southwest point of the island. Though not on the beach it is surrounded by the natural beauty of the island. Avenida Governador Mário Covas, 11495 (☎ 12-3894-1756).

Pousada do Capitão ($$) is well run with rooms tastefully decorated like those on a yacht, and with a nice garden setting. Children under 12 are not allowed and during January a minimum of five days is required. Avenida Almirante Tamandaré, 272, in Itaquanduba (☎ 12-3896-1037 or 12-3896 2253).

Pousada Carolina ($-$$) is close to the action in Perequê, about a 10-minute walk from the beach on Rua Carolina Vanderstappen, 275. Rooms are spacious (☎ 12-3896-1000 or 12-3896-1603).

Pousada Canto Bravo ($) is a bit distant but close to the great beach called Bonete and other scenic spots on the southern part of the island. Access is along a 7.8-mile/13-km trail or by boat. The ambience and seclusion are worth the distance (☎ 12-3896-5111).

Ubatuba

Recanto das Toninhas (500-550) is a well run luxury resort and the best in Ubatuba, right on Toninhas beach in a beautiful location. Call for reservations (☎ 0800-17-7557, toll-free in Brazil, or 11-3288-2022).

Itamambuca Eco Resort (350-500) is a resort and spa on Itamambuca beach with full services. There is an option for camping ($) on-site with bathrooms and facilities and five-day packages for a discount. Access is via BR 101 toward Paraty from Ubatuba (☎ 12-3834-3000).

Recanto das Toninhas

Ubá Pousada (130-220) offers basic lodging 100 yards from the beach of Praia Itaguá, nightlife and the aquariums of Ubatuba. It is at Avenida Milton de Holanda Maia, 137, in Itaguá (☎ 12-3832-4653).

Casa Mila (75-150) is in a secluded and romantic location with a view of the ocean, far from Ubatuba's nightlife but perfect for couples. You will have to walk at least 1,000 yards on a trail to get to the beach but the setting is fantastic. To get there watch for the signs to Alameda beach off BR 101 about 18 miles/30 km from Ubatuba toward Paraty, turning off on the paved access road for another 1.2 miles/two km (☎ 12-3832-9021 or 12-8127-7759).

Where to Eat

Santos

Cantina Di Lucca ($$), on Rua Dr. Tolentino Filgueiras, 80, in Gonzaga, is one of the better Italian restaurants in town (☎ 13-3284-0444).

Tika ($$$) serves Japanese food on Rua Bahia, 93, in Gonzaga (☎ 13-3284-8838).

Tertúlio ($$$) is a *rodozio*-style steak house on Avenida Bartolomeu de Gusmão, 187, in Ponta da Praia (☎ 13-3261-1641).

Guarujá

For snacks and drinks the kiosks ($) along the beaches are a good choice. Just pick one you like.

Rufino's ($$$), on Avenida Miguel Stéfano, 4,795, at the Praia de Enseada, serves fresh seafood where you can pick out the fish you want and they cook it up on the spot for lunch or dinner every day. It was so successful that one has opened in São Paulo (☎ 13-3351-5771).

Combinati ($$$), on Rua Mário Ribeiro, 600, in Pitangueiras or Estrada do Pernambuco in Enseada, serves the best Italian cuisine for lunch and dinner every day (☎ 13-3386-9005 in Pitangueiras or 13-3351-3030 in Enseada).

São Sebastião

Manacá ($$$$) is expensive but worth it for the great seafood and intriguing jungle atmosphere. It is set on stilts amid the banana trees. You may need reservations during the busy season. It is on Rua Manacá, 102, in Camburi (☎ 12-3865-1566).

In Boiçucanga, there is a row of about a dozen restaurants on the street called Avenida Walkir Vergani, along the beach. **Casa de Pedra** ($$) is a good choice for seafood.

In the Centro there is a row of bars and restaurants along the street called Avenida Altino Arantes – the busiest places are usually the best.

Ilha Bela

VIANA
PRAIA

Viana ($$$$), on Avenida Reale, has a veranda facing the beach and serves excellent seafood at Praia do Viana. They've been there for decades (☎ 12-3896-1089).

Famiglia Manzoli ($$$) serves Italian food in Perequê on Avenida Princesa Isabel, 207 (☎ 12-3896-5791).

Pier Pizza ($$) serves pizza from the pier in the Vila and tends to be busy.

Ubatuba

Terra Papagalli ($$$) is a little pricey but one of the best for seafood on Rua Xavantes, 537, facing the beach in Itaguá (☎ 12-3832-1488).

Peixe com Banana ($$) is one of the better known restaurants here where you can sample the local specialty fish with bananas among other options. It faces the beach at Rua Guarani, 255, at Praia do Cruzeiro (☎ 12-3832-1712).

Perequim ($$) serves decent Italian food facing the beach at Rua Guarani, 377, at Praia do Cruzeiro (☎ 12-3832-1354).

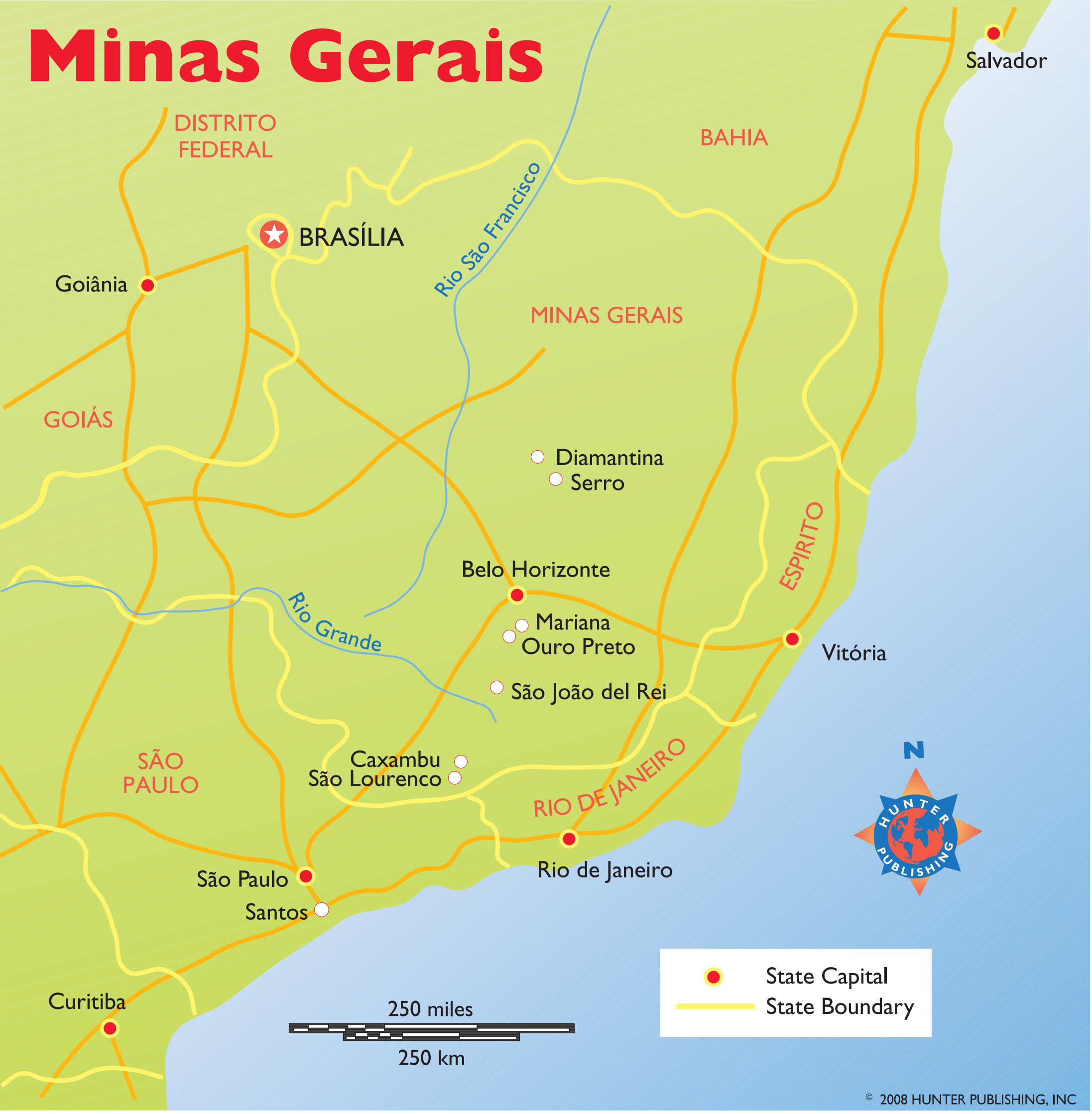
Rei do Peixe ($$) has cheap fish at Rua Guarani, 480, in Itaguá (☎ 12-3832-3272).

Minas Gerais

Minas Gerais is one of Brazil's most important states. After the coast was settled at Rio de Janeiro, in 1696 the *Bandeirantes* explorers began trekking inland in search of territory, slaves and riches. Here in this mountainous region of Southeastern Brazil they encountered legends of enormous mineral wealth from the indigenous people they conquered. When gold was discovered it was not long before this region became one of the wealthiest in the entire New World. With the wealth came European educations for the children of Brazil. The locals began to question their Imperial rulers, who seized taxes at gunpoint, following the social changes underway in the United States and France. It was around 1788 when a group of intellectuals, landowners, clergy and officers began conspiring to start a revolution here in Minas Gerais. The leader was dentist Joaquim José da Silva Xavier, better known as the "tooth-puller," Tiradentes. Betrayed by one of the conspirators, the group was arrested and Tiradentes was executed in 1792. The rest were sent into exile in Africa.

Today the gold is gone but Minas Gerais remains important to the economy while the state's famous artists, athletes and politicians contribute to Brazil's cultural wealth. Within a day's drive of São Paulo or Rio de

Minas Gerais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BRASÍLIA
Goiânia
GOIÁS
Rio São Francisco
BAHIA
Salvador
MINAS GERAIS
Diamantina
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Belo Horizonte
Mariana
Ouro Preto
São João del Rei
Rio Grande
ESPIRITO
Vitória
Caxambu
São Lourenco
SÃO PAULO
RIO DE JANEIRO
Rio de Janeiro
São Paulo
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State Boundary

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Waterfall in Serra do Cipó National Park

(Pedro H. Ribeiro)

Janeiro, Minas has something for everyone. Options range from hikes in the mountains to the **Historic Cities** that appear just as they did 300 years ago. In the countryside you can find waterfalls, rolling hills and scenic valleys tucked away in the mountains. The scents of wood stoves and the sounds of young "bohemians" playing guitar around the public squares are typical of the state's charms. This chapter includes some rugged options in one of Brazil's oldest national parks, the **Serra do Cipó**. For a romantic side-trip, the ruins of a former seminary in the mountains close to state capital Belo Horizonte are highly recommended. Minas Gerais has a warm and rainy summer season from October through March, with a dry, cool winter season from May through September when temperatures can drop to freezing at night. Temperatures are in the range of 16-31°C (61-88°F) year-round though it's a good idea to bring something warm, or plan to enjoy a cozy wood-fire in your rustic pousada, as it can get chilly at night. It can rain frequently too and in general the recommended time to go is from April through October.

Belo Horizonte

- Modern city with options for food, lodging and shopping
- See the famous Pampulha district designed by Oscar Niemeyer
- Consider a side-trip to the Caraça monastery and inn

The modern capital of Belo Horizonte is a stop along the way for most travelers. This city of well over two million inhabitants is one of Brazil's largest. There are good basic facilities and restaurants, but the city is fairly drab, except for the downtown area and the Pampulha district. This was the first planned city of Brazil and groundbreaking began in the late 19th century, when the capital was moved from Ouro Preto. This ambitious undertaking was the brainchild of an urban planner, Aarão Reis, from the state of Pará. The distinct checkerboard shape of the downtown area is his, with large avenues, wide streets and symmetrical city-blocks at 45° angles from the main roads. It can be interesting to walk through but maddening to drive. By the 1940s the city reached maximum capacity of 200,000 people, and renowned Brazilian architect Oscar Niemeyer was hired to inject some life into the architecture beyond the mainly austere, streamlined high-rises typical of the mili-

tary dictatorship period. If you are just passing through, there is plenty to keep you entertained, and the city does have some excellent options for dining, shopping and nightlife. The highlights are the architectural sites in the Pampulha district (a Niemeyer project) and the museums. Your best bet is to try some of the side-trips like the Serra de Cipó National Park, the nearby historic town of Sabará, or especially Caraça Park, for a glimpse of the state's natural beauty and wildlife.

How to Get Here

By plane there are two airports, with most flights landing at **Confins International Airport** about 24 miles/40 km north of town. **Pampulha** is a regional airport about 4.3 miles/seven km north of downtown. There are flights from major cities in Brazil on local airlines. By **bus**, which is a reasonable option, there are multiple departures and arrivals from Rio de Janeiro (about seven hours), São Paulo (10 hours), and Brasília (12 hours), with daily long-haul departures to Salvador (22 hours). The bus station (☎ 31-3277-6907) is at Praça da Rodoviária toward the end of Avenida Afonso Pena downtown. Getting here by **car** will reduce travel time by at least an hour or two compared to the buses. The highways are in generally good condition and well-marked from Rio and São Paulo.

Getting Around

As a planned city, Belo is fairly easy to navigate. Taxis are recommended, but there is an efficient city bus system (if you speak Portuguese), and a subway with two lines from the main rail station. If you need a car, **Lokamig Rent-a-Car** has multiple options at both airports (☎ 31-3335-8977). Because of the street layout at 45° angles from the major thoroughfares on the checkerboard grid, driving can be confusing, and parking is also a hassle. Street crime can also be a problem in some areas. Observe all normal precautions.

For More Information

Municipal tour board, **Belotur**, is at Rua Pernambuco, 284, in the Funcionários neighborhood (☎ 31-3277-9777). They publish a free monthly guide with maps. There are tourist information booths at both airports, the Mercado Central, Municipal Park, São Francisco de Assis Church in Pampulha, and the central bus station. The government site, **www.belohorizonte.mg.gov.br**, also has information. You might want to drop by the state tour board, **Sectur** (☎ 31-3272-8551), at Praça Rio Branco, 56, for more information. Their website is **www.turismo.mg.gov.br**.

Sightseeing

Museums

The Abílio Barreto History Museum

The **Arts and Crafts Museum** (Museu de Artes e Ofícios) at the Central Rail Station has nearly 2,000 works from the past three centuries in wood, iron, leather, ceramics, and jewelry. They are at the Praça da Estação downtown; ☎ 31-3213-0003. The **Abílio Barreto History Museum** (Museu Histórico Abílio Barret), on Rua Bernardo Mascarenhas in Cidade Jardim, was built around an 1883 mansion and has displays of period items and sacred art. It is all that remains of the village that stood here when the city was built. Open Tuesday through Sunday 10 am-5 pm. The scenic grounds are open 7 am-7 pm. ☎ 31-3296-3896.

The **Museum of Minas** (Museu Mineiro), at Aveninda João Pinheiro, 342, downtown, once the State Senate Building, has displays of religious art from the 17th century and canvases by Athayde, one of the most famous "Minas Gerais Baroque" painters. Open daily 11:30 am-6:30 pm (closed on Monday), and weekends and holidays, 10 am-4 pm. ☎ 31-3269-1168. Belo Horizonte's **Natural History Museum** (Museu de História Natural), on Rua Gustavo da Silveira, 1035, is at the Botanical Gardens, with a skeleton from thousands of years ago found at the Lagoa Santo lagoon in the state, bones from prehistoric animals, and indigenous artifacts from the Maxacali tribe. There is also a small palace here called the Palacinho, which served as a summer residence for the governor. Open Monday-Wednesday 8-11 am and 1-4 pm, weekends 9 am-4 pm (on weekends there is a nominal fee). ☎ 31-3482-9723.

The Pampulha District

About 7½ miles (12 km) from downtown on Avenida Otacílio Negrão de Lima, is the famous Pampulha district, a landscaped park by Burle Marx with architectural works by Oscar Niemeyer, and artworks by Brazilian greats Cândido Portinari and Alfredo Ceschiatti. Dating from

São Francisco de Assis Church

(donabrasil.com)

the 1940s during the second construction boom in the city, when Niemeyer was comparatively unknown, Pampulha was the brainchild of then mayor Jucelino Kubitschek, who would later become president and command the building of Brasília. The sites here include the **São Francisco de Assis** Church, a controversial Modernist church with sensuous curves that foreshadowed Niemeyer's later works, and a rendition by Portinari of the Catholic saint's life that calls to mind Picasso's *Guernica*, and forced the closure of the church for over a decade. Niemeyer's **Casa de Baile** was a dance hall in the '40s and today is a cultural center, with rounded shapes, glass walls and an auditorium on a small island in the lagoon (closed on Monday). A casino has been converted into the **Pampulha Art Museum**, which revived the Baroque style with curves, open spaces, and a charming sculpture garden at Avenida Otacílio Negrão de Lima 16585 (☎ 31-3277-7946). The museum, open from 9 am-7 pm Tuesday-Sunday, houses modern and contemporary artworks. On the third floor is a music hall with shows on the first Wednesday of every month.

There are two stadiums here, the **Mineirão** from 1965, one of the largest covered stadiums in the world, with capacity of 130,000 spectators, and the more recent **Mineirinho** from 1980, with capacity of 25,000, where sporting and musical event are held as well as an Arts Fair, on Avenida Antônio Caran. 1,000. The Zoo and Botanical Gardens were added to the park in 1959. One of the best ways to see the Pampulha is by boat from the Lagoon (see *Adventures*).

Parks

The 44½-acre **Municipal Park** from 1897, once called Chácara do Sapo, is at the heart of the city along Avenida Afonso Pena. It's a nice spot to relax in the open air, Tuesday through Sunday from 6 am-6 pm (☎ 31-3273-2001). There is the **Arts Palace** cultural center nearby, a music hall designed by Oscar Niemeyer and an art gallery on Afonso Pena 1,537 (☎ 31-3237-7399). The 568-acre **Mangabeiras Park** by Burle Marx, the esteemed Brazilian architect, has screaming marmosets in the trees. From here you can see the beautiful horizon that gives the city its name. There is an entrance on Avenida Anel da Serra to the south or Avenida Bandeirantes to the north, open Tuesday through Sunday 8 am-6 pm; ☎ 31-3277-9495. The small **Zoo and Botanical Gardens** is set in a savanna brushwood reserve typical of the region,

Liberty Square

with reptiles, birds, mammals and a butterfly house, at Avenida Otacílio Negrão de Lima, 8,000, in Pampulha. Open Tuesday-Sunday 8:30 am-4 pm. ☎ 31-3277-7100.

Liberty Square (Praça da Liberdade) has the **Governors' Palace**, with visits until 2 pm, where you can see salons decorated with paintings, crystal, and antique furniture, with a changing of the guard at 9 am. The **Public Library** here has impressive imperial palms in front and two projects by Oscar Niemeyer, as well as the 19th-century library building.

Where to Stay

The hotels in Belo Horizonte are geared to business travelers. A service charge of 10% is added.

Liberty Palace Hotel ($$$) is a fine place, with four lavish suites, as well as standard rooms, all with central air-conditioning, satellite television, Internet, mini-bar and safe. It's in the Svassi neighborhood, close to the nightlife at Rua Paraíba, 1465. www.libertypalace.com.br or ☎ 31-2121-0902.

Belo Horizonte Plaza ($$$) is a luxury, modern hotel with central air-conditioning, acoustic insulation, cable television, non-smoking floors, steam sauna, covered pool and gym. In the Lourdes neighborhood at Rua Timbiras, 1660. www.bhplaza.com.br or ☎ 31-3247-4700, toll free ☎ 800-707-4707.

Quality Afonso Pena ($$$) is a good hotel with pool, steam and dry saunas, and fitness center, at Avenida Afonso Pena, 3761. www.atlantica-hotels.com or ☎ 31-3263-1300, toll free ☎ 800-555-855.

Savassi ($$) on Rua Sergipe, 939 is an economy hotel with pool and sauna, in the chic Savassi district. ☎ 31-3261-3266. Hotel Praça da Liberdade ($$) is a smaller place in the price range on Avenida Brasil, 1912 in the Savassi neighborhood. The 29 rooms have air-conditioning with a bar. www.pracadaliberdade.com.br or ☎ 31-3261-1711.

Where to Eat

Amigo do Rei ($$-$$$) serves Iranian cuisine. At Rua Quintiliano Silva, 118, in the Santo Antônio neighborhood. Open Wednesday through Saturday for dinner. (☎ 31-3296-3881).

Cozinha de Minas ($$) is a traditional favorite serving regional specialties and live music. Rua Gonçaves Dias, 45, in the Funcionários neighborhood. Open daily. (☎ 31-3227-1579).

Focaccia Fiorentina ($$$) is run by the same family as the Tuscan restaurant in New York. Rua Álvares Maciel, 490, in the Santa Efigênia neighborhood. Open daily. (☎ 31-3214-0929).

Mix Garden Café ($$$) serves contemporary cuisine in an upscale garden patio. Rua Projetada Jardim Canadá, 65, in Nova Lima. Open Thursday and Friday from 7 pm, Saturday for lunch and dinner from 12 am, and Sunday for lunch from 12 am-5 pm. (☎ 31-3541-8917).

Mosteiro ($$$) serves Mediterranean cuisine. The décor is bamboo and stained glass with adobe walls, supposedly like a monastery. The lunch buffet ($$) is very good. Rua Santa Rita Durão, 940 in Savassi. (☎ 31-3261-2385).

Xapuri ($-$$) is a famous spot in Pampulha, with wooden tables, stone floors, and rustic Minas Gerais fare. Open daily for lunch and dinner at Rua Mandacaru, 260 (☎ 31-496-6455).

What to Buy

Minas Gerais is famous for its Colonial-style arts and crafts. There are two very good fairs where you can find them in Belo Horizonte. The **Afonso Pena Arts and Crafts Fair**, at Avenida Afonso Pena downtown, open from 8 am-2 pm on Sundays, is one of the largest in Latin America, with 3,000 exhibitors, among them food stalls where you can sample delicious local specialties. The **Tom Jobim Fair** has sections for antiques, décor, among other categories, with an enormous outdoor bar serving food and drink, plus occasional live shows. It takes place Saturdays from 8 am-5 pm at Avenida Bernardo Monteiro, between Avenida Brasil and Rua dos Otoni.

The indoor **Mercado Central** or "central market" is fun to explore, with its 400 shops selling produce, flowers, herbal medicines, and crafts, with cold beer and snacks, on Avenida Augusto de Lima, 744. It's open from Monday through Tuesday, 7 am-6 pm, and Sundays and holidays, 7-12 am (☎ 31-3274-9434). The **Cenarte Central de Artesanato Mineiro** at Rua Tupinambas, 956, downtown, is a state-sponsored commercial center for arts and crafts with some very high-quality items at reasonable prices, including textiles, ceramics, wood carvings and soapstone. Open weekdays from 9 am-6:30 pm and Saturday from 9 am-1 pm. ☎ 31-3279-1476.

A good arts and crafts shop is **Mãos de Minas**, at Rua Grão Mogul, 662, in the Sion neighborhood, is open Monday through Friday from 9 am-7 pm and on Saturdays from 9 am-1 pm. ☎ 31-3282-8298. For fashion, the **Savassi** neighborhood has contemporary and sophisticated local designs for a fraction of what you would pay overseas, with a lively street scene in the evening at the local restaurants and bars. Avenida do Contorno, 6061. The shops open daily 10 am-10 pm and on Sunday 2-8 pm. ☎ 31-3284-1615.

Side-Trips

Caraça Park Hermitage

Guara wolf

Caraça Park (Parque do Caraça) is 78 miles/130 km east of Belo Horizonte along Federal Highway BR-262, and makes a good day-trip or overnight. The park, open from 7 am-5 pm, is nestled in mountainous terrain at a high altitude. It gets chilly here during the winter and at night. While there are several marked trails, the only buildings are the Sanctuary (Santuário do Caraça), a seminary for wealthy Brazilians, dating originally from 1777. It has been converted into a guesthouse run by monks. Not much remains of the original building after a fire gutted the place in the 1960s, but a partial restoration project has helped bring the ruins back to life. Brazilian president Juscelino Kubitscheck, who built Belo Horizonte and Brasília, was schooled here. This solitary hermitage with its 1883 chapel, amid the steep mountains and remnants of the Atlantic rainforest, is a quiet and peaceful retreat. The monks care for the local wildlife, including ocelots, guara-wolves, miniature anteaters and other creatures.

Guara-wolves are the largest canids of South America, living in southern Brazil, Paraguay, and Bolivia east of the Andes. The adult animal stands almost three feet tall at the shoulder and its fur is reddish brown to golden orange on the sides.

Looking down upon the sanctuary is a natural "face" in the mountainside that gives the park its name: the caraça, or "big face." In the surrounding countryside are trails, natural pools, waterfalls and caves to be explored. The guesthouse is clean but not luxurious; there are, however, two "imperial suites." Meals are included. The Pousada do Caraça ($-$$) is near the entrance to the park. (☎ 31-3837-2698).

Sabará Historic Town

One of the Historical Cities, Sabará is just a half-hour southeast of Belo Horizonte by car or bus. Founded by wandering *Bandeirantes* (the early explorers), the city has Asian architectural influences brought by immigrants from the Portuguese colony at Macau. There are many Baroque churches decorated with sculpted soapstone. To get here, take a bus from the bus station in Belo Horizonte, and tell your driver to let you off at the *Centro Historico*. A single day is enough to see everything. The town is fairly poor today, with shantytowns ringing the outskirts of the historic district. The historic district is the best place to wander. You don't need a map, but the hills require some footwork.

The most famous historic churches here are **Nossa Senhora do Ó**, from 1717, at Largo Nossa Senhora do Ó, **Nossa Senhora do Carmo**, from 1763, at Rua do Carmo, and the **Nossa Senhora da Conceição Cathedral**, with its magnificent ornate gilded interior and Asian accents on the façade. It dates from 1701 and is at Praça Getúlio Vargas. Also check out the **Solar de Padre Correia mansion**, built in 1773 (today the City Hall office), on Rua Dom Pedro II (also called Rua Direita) 200, and the **Municipal Theatre** (1770), which is famous for its acoustics, nearby at Rua Dom Pedro II.

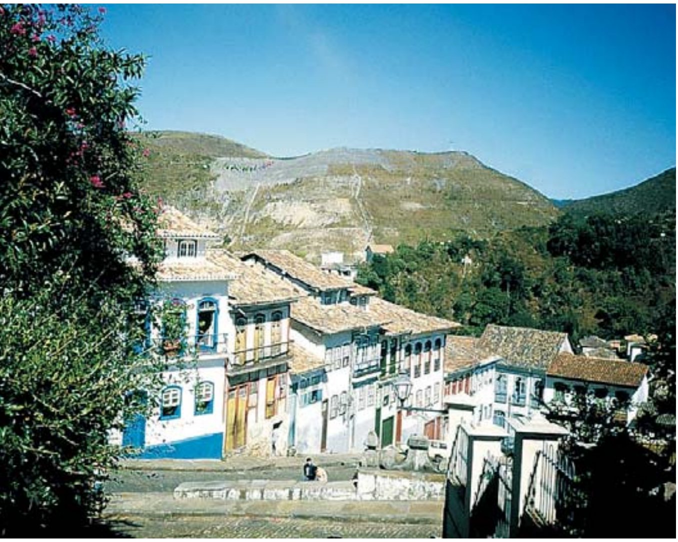
There is a **Gold Museum** (Museu de Ouro) at the old foundry building at Rua Intendência, with furniture and objects from the Gold Rush. Praça Santa Rita is the main square and nearby there is a **traveler's info center** (Rua Dom Pedro II, 223). You can catch the bus on the road heading out of town back to Belo Horizonte if you don't want to bother walking back to the bus station, which is a little inconvenient – ask for directions at the info center, if needed.

Where to Stay & Eat

On the weekends, things get busy at night around the public squares, Melo Viana and Santa Rita. For lunch or dinner, try **Cê Qui Sabe** ($), with an open-air section in front serving delicious regional specialties and cachaça, at Rua Mestre Caetano, 56. **Bar-Óco** ($), at Rua Mestre Ritinha, 115, has a good regional lunch buffet.

For lodging, the **Solar São Francisco** ($) is recommended. The Colonial mansion has been converted to an inn on Rua São Francisco, 345, with 30 rooms, bar and sauna (☎ 31-3671-3040). A cheaper, smaller place is **Solar do Sepulvida** ($) on Rua da Intendência, 371, with sauna and a pool in a Colonial mansion (☎ 31-3671-2705), next door to the Gold Museum.

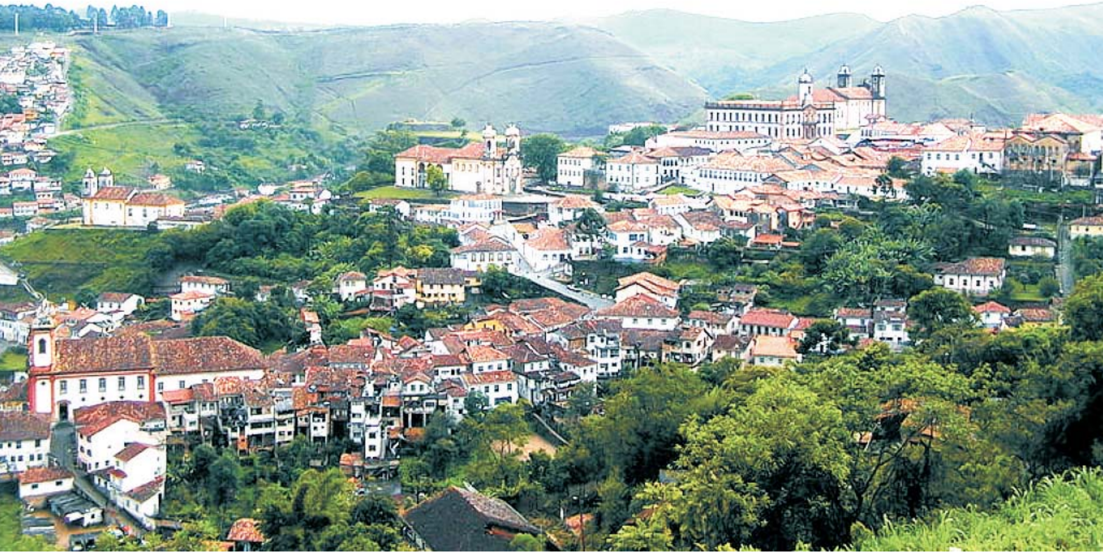
The Historical Cities



Diamantina

The Historical Cities of Minas Gerais are full of the history and folklore of Brazil. Dating from the early 1700s, these Colonial towns look virtually the same as when they were built, with stone streets and ornate churches at every step. The wealth of the Gold Rush was staggering, and the Portuguese crown quickly built roads and settlements with the use of forced labor. It was fashionable among aristocrat families to build a church, and the gold barons who lived here left behind hundreds of them, some considered among the most important in the New World. At virtually every step there is another church, many beautifully embellished with gold, painted frescoes and stonework. This is a great region for photography.

There are excellent handicrafts for sale at reasonable prices. The special rustic atmosphere of the Colonial towns is reason enough to visit. If you are interested in more details about the history and folklore of the region, consider hiring a local guide (in fact in some places, you can hardly avoid it because there are so many on the streets.) Each town is unique. **Ouro Preto** is the most famous and a good choice if you only have a day or two. **Diamantina** is similar in architecture, artsy, quieter and less traveled. The towns of **Tiradentes** and **São João Del Rey** each have their own appeal and are the best places to find local handicrafts. There are, in fact, dozens of small historic towns (**Congonhas do Campo**, **Santa Barbara** and **Catas Altas**, to name a few), scattered through the state. They can make short, interesting side-trips if you have time, but they may be difficult to access or lack basic facilities for travelers. If you want to explore beyond the towns recommended here, there is a good website (/), which has photos and some basic information about the Historic Cities to help you out, but only in Portuguese.



Ouro Preto

- Visit deactivated mines here or in nearby Mariana
- See elaborate churches built during the Gold Rush
- Have a jewel custom-made while you wait

Ouro Preto is the best-known of the historical cities, a haunting and romantic town with stone buildings and hilltop views. Though heavily traveled at times, it should not put you off. There are excellent facilities and plenty of options. The town was first known as Vila Rica (the "rich village"), and only later adopted its current name, meaning "black gold." The name comes from oxidation on the metal that was first discovered by the adventurers, called *Bandeirantes*, in 1693. As the legend goes, one of them found black nuggets in a stream that later proved to be pure gold with a thin layer of oxidation.

The discovery changed the history of Brazil. Vila Rica became a boom town and, when the gold ran out, it collapsed. You can see much of what there is to offer in a day or so, but in at least two days you can also visit nearby Mariana, or soak in a little more of the local culture with the young poets and the town's many students, who gather at the main squares at night. One of the most striking characteristics of Ouro Preto (besides the steep hills) is the number of churches, most filled with precious works of art.

An excellent option is to visit the deactivated **Mine of Chico Rey** in Ouro Preto or the **Mina da Passagem** (see *Side-Trips*). There is a pleasant walk to the peace and quiet of a hill-top **Zen Buddhist temple** overlooking the town. The Colonial architecture includes many examples of "Minas Baroque" and other relics from the past, such as the handiwork of the crippled sculptor Aleijadinho. Another renowned artist is

Athayde, the illustrious painter of frescos in some of the churches. And, at the shops in town, you can find precious and semi-precious stones and have one set for you while you wait.

There are a very large number of local guides or even residents who at virtually every step will offer to show you around. Now that the gold is gone, this is how many people survive. One way to handle this is to hire one to fend the rest off.

It can get chilly at night – bring a sweater or a light jacket. It is normally humid, with a rainy season from December to March. From June to July, temperatures can get near to freezing at night.

How to Get Here

You can only get here by bus or car. By **bus**, check with the bus stations in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. The bus station is at Praça Rio Branco. By **car**, from Belo Horizonte take BR 040 toward Rio de Janeiro 12 miles/20 km, then enter the roundabout to BR 356 (Rodovia dos Inconfidentes) toward Ouro Preto. From São Paulo, take BR 381 to Lavras and then take BR 265 to Barbacena. From there you take BR 040 toward Belo Horizonte until you reach Conselheiro Lafaiete. Then take the Estrada Real through the town called Ouro Branco until you get to Ouro Preto. It takes about eight or nine hours. If you want, you can take BR 381 to Belo Horizonte and follow the directions above, but this takes longer.

From Rio de Janeiro it is a little easier (the traffic in the perimeter of both cities can be a little hectic, but it gets a lot better inland). It takes six or seven hours. Take BR 040 to Conselheiro Lafaiete, and follow the directions as if from São Paulo. Once outside the cities, the road trip is very scenic and there are many places to stop along the way.

You can arrange for ground transfer in a comfortable van for about $40 per person from Pampulha airport in Belo Horizonte to your hotel in Ouro Preto with **Master Turismo** (☎ 31-3330-3365, www.masterturismo.com.br).

Estrada Real: In the Footsteps of the Gold Rush

Gold was discovered in Brazil in the 17th century only by chance. Adventurers returning to the metropolis on the coast from Minas Gerais had no idea that the blackish, limed-over metal they had considered a mere curiosity would turn out to represent the richest find even known to the Americas at that time. The Portuguese royals realized the significance of the find and immediately set to work building a road to take the riches of the continent swiftly to the port at Paraty (see *the Green Coast of Rio de Janeiro*, page 104). Making use of slave labor, they set to work building a 745-mile road over the rainforested mountains and into the dryer lands of the interior.

This so-called Estrada Real or "Royal Road" extended from the soon-to-be thriving gold and diamond mining settlements in Minas Gerais to the bustling sugar-cane and rum port of Paraty. As the islands around Paraty became infested with pirates, a new road had to be built linking the mines to what would become the better-protected capital city of Brazil – Rio de Janeiro. Today, you can drive this route, which is well signaled and easy to get around for foreigners. To drive the entire route from Rio to Diamantina, in Minas Gerais, it takes nine or 10 hours. The best option though is to spend a few days enjoying the mountain scenery, stopping along the way at the historical city of Ouro Preto. From there you have the option of continuing along the Caminho dos Diamantes (or "Diamond Road") onto Diamantina, or turning back along a separate route of the Estrada Real toward the coast and Paraty. There are 177 towns and districts spread along the entire route, which passes through three different states. There are entire sections of the old road that you can actually drive along as an alternative to the main highway, which will give you a feel for the enormity of the road-building project. Specific details on how to get to each of the main destinations are included in each individual chapter.

For More Information

The **Tourist Information Center** can answer general questions on Praça Tiradentes (number 41, ☎ 31-3559-3269). Note you will likely be approached by touts – they get commissions, so take lodging advice with a grain of salt, but they try to be helpful. Ouro Preto is safe in town but there have been occasional robberies reported at the nearby waterfalls that receive a lot of out-of-towners. Keep in mind that there is a lot of walking through cobbled streets and over steep hills. Comfortable shoes are your friends here. The sinuous streets can be a little confusing but from practically any hilltop you can see your way back to the main square. If you need a taxi, try ☎ 31-3551-1248.

Sightseeing

Historic Square

The main square, called Praça Tiradentes, was named after the revolutionary dentist. Joaquim Jose da Silva Xavier, the doomed leader of the Inconfidência Mineira movement, who was betrayed by a conspirator and put to death for treason. His remains were displayed here as a grim reminder to the locals of the extent of the royal reach. From the square you can reach virtually all the sights, restaurants and lodging in town on foot. On one side of the large rectangular plaza is the **Museu da Inconfidência**, a museum dedicated to the revolutionary movement. The "óratorios" displayed in this former jail house built in 1785 were prayer niches built of wood that were common in Colonial Brazilian households and designed to ward off evil spirits. The museum opens Tuesday through Sunday. On the other side of the plaza is the **Palácio dos Governadores**, dating from 1741. This was the government center when the city was the capital. Today it houses a mineralogical museum, open from Tuesday through Sunday.

Praça Tiradentes
(www.ira.cnr.it)

★Historic Churches & Buildings

There are countless churches in Ouro Preto, almost all of them worth checking out. However, some stand out as the best. There are so many that, if you want to see them all, you should hire a local guide. Or look for a detailed guidebook in the bookstore at the information center on the main square. Don't forget that these are places of worship. Conservative clothing is generally required and photos are not allowed. Some charge a nominal fee that helps with preservation efforts. Most are closed Mondays. Here are the highlights:

N.S. do Pilar Cathedral is one of the richest in Brazil, with over 884 lbs/400 kg of gold and silver. Its Baroque "illusionist" paintings (which change depending on your point of view) and architecture are extraordinary. Started in 1711, the cathedral with its six altars is at Monsenhor Castilho Barbosa (☎ 31-3551-1209). There is a sacred art museum in an annex.

N.S. da Conceição Cathedral, built in 1727, is the "other" cathedral in town. Here is where the mortal remains of Aleijadinho are located. In an annex is the **Aleijadinho Museum**. At Praça

Conceição Cathedral
(www.ira.cnr.it)

Antonio Dias on Rua Bernardo Vasconcelos. (☎ 31-3551-3282).

São Francisco de Assis, built in 1765, is famous for its paintings and sculptures by the artists Athayde and Aleijadinho. Considered one of the most beautiful Colonial churches in Brazil, it is at the Largo de Coimbra (☎ 31-3551-3282).

N.S. do Carmo, from 1766, also has famous works by Athayde and Aleijadinho that are worth a visit. It is at Rua Brigadeiro Musqueira.

Santa Efigênia was built for and by slaves starting in 1733. As the legend goes, they smuggled gold dust out of Chico Rei's mine using oil to glue it to their bodies under their clothes. They then used it to build the church. The saints and angels are depicted with African features.

Started in 1782, the **Casa dos Contos** was the home of the feared local tax collector. At the time, the Portuguese royals would order soldiers into the cities to collect and melt down gold and silver owned by the townspeople if they did not meet their production quotas. Later the building was converted to a jail. Here you can see the old foundry and a secret passage in the old stone building.

The **Teatro Municipal** is said to be the oldest theater in all of South America. It was the pride of Vila Rica in 1746. (☎ 31-3559-3224).

☞ **Safety Tip:** some travelers have reported robberies at the waterfalls surrounding Ouro Preto. Trips to the waterfalls here (once an excellent option) are discouraged. If you want to take your chances anyway, my advice is to go with a licensed tour guide hired in the main square.

Adventures on Rails

★★There is a sightseeing option called the **Trem da Vale**, linking Ouro Preto to Mariana. The 11-mile/19-km stretch of fully recovered mining rail has a special panoramic car with transparent sides to take in the view along the enjoyable ride. The engine – a genuine 1940s-era "Smokin' Mary," or Maria Fumaça in Portuguese – is worth a snapshot in itself, and was donated to the project by the historic Brazilian mining company, Companhia Vale do Rio Doce. There are four stops on the line. Free on Thursdays, the train is popular with locals, and a fun way for travelers to get around.

ALTERNATIVE ADVENTURES: ZEN BUDDHIST TEMPLE

The **Mosteiro Zen Pico de Raios** is on the top of Pico dos Raios hill, also known as Morro São Sebastião. You can get here by car or by hiking. The view in this austere gardened temple is amazing, allowing you to see the entire town below. The site was founded in 1984 by Zen Master Ryotan Tokuda and upgraded from monastery status in 1999. Its objective is as a cultural center for the public at large as well as a training and meditation center for Buddhists.

You can visit from 8 am-10 pm and from 2-4 pm daily. Visits by non-Buddhists are discouraged during a monthly retreat for monks between the 21st and 27th of every month. A small donation is accepted for a day visit. Even non-Buddhists can stay here in a simple but comfortable dormitory for $25 a day, which includes three vegetarian meals.

Note that it gets chilly here even in the summer and you should bring a heavy blanket or sleeping bag to stay warm, as well as personal items such as soap, toothbrush, towel, etc. The use of any drugs or alcohol is prohibited. Lengthy stays should be discussed directly with the monks. Practicing Buddhists can participate in the monthly seven-day retreats and four training periods throughout the year. You are asked to get in touch at least a week before arrival to make arrangements for your stay, but if there is space you will be accommodated. You can write to them at the Mosteiro Zen Pico de Raios, Caixa Postal 101, Morro de São Sebastião, Ouro Preto 35400-000 MG, Brazil. If you have trouble getting in touch, ask at the Mina do Chico Rei or with the guides in town.

Adventures Underground

★★Mina do Chico Rei

This deactivated gold mine was once the property of Chico Rei, an African tribal king. When the slaves arrived by boat in Rio de Janeiro, the men that survived the trip were called Chico and the women were called Maria. Chico was given his surname "Rei" or "king" after his master noticed during the trip to Minas Gerais that he was a leader and sang to encourage his people as they made the hard journey on foot. He was later freed and given a royal title and great wealth from the mine, living much as any other nobleman of the day and even building a small castle. This he used to finance the building of churches for the slaves, evading the Casa dos Contos by smuggling out gold dust on the bodies of the mine workers. It is believed that secret tunnels were used for this purpose, tunnels that led into the churches used by the slaves. Legend has it that there are ghosts of those workers who died in the mine, trapped there by the precarious walls.

The entrance to the mine was discovered by the family who lives here now. It was found in their back yard behind a wall. Today you can visit some of the tunnels, but that involves a lot of scrambling over rocks. The **restaurant** here is a great place to have lunch ($), and the owners are very friendly. Outside is a fanciful modern statue of Chico Rei. Rua Dom Silvério 108. ☎ 31-3551-1749.

★★Mina da Passagem

Entrance to Mina da Passagem

Much larger than the Chico Rei mine, the Mina da Passagem was in recent years deactivated after producing close to 35 tons of gold since the 1700s. Between Ouro Preto and Mariana, it requires a car to get here, but the trip is definitely worth it. The slow descent down into the mine is via a clanking rattle-trap run by an ancient looking mechanism above ground. Keep your head down! The mine itself is filled with enormous galleries and blue pools (you can't swim due to toxic tailings in the water). Most is closed off, but there are close to seven miles/11 km of tunnels at a depth of 1,008 feet/315 m in the rock. You can still see a little gold trapped in the quartz veins. The descent on the hard wood trolley is an adventure in itself, but once in the mine, you can explored on foot with none of the crawling around needed for the Chico Rei mine. Up above there is a little museum showing some of the Colonial mining tools and a carriage for nobles that was once carried by hand by slaves. There is a gift shop on-site as well. Entrance costs around $5 per person with a guide. Open every day from 9 am to 5 pm and is on the road to Mariana from Ouro Preto, about three miles/5 km away.

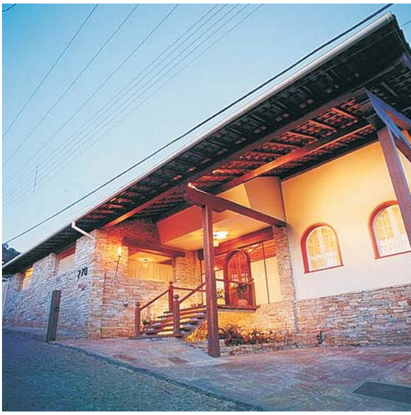
Where to Stay

There are some excellent lodging options in Ouro Preto, and some hotels do not add service charges. Check ahead. Reservations are a good idea any time of year.

The splendid old **Hotel Pousada do Arcanjo** ($$$) lets you step back in time, but with modern conveniences. It is on Rua São Miguel Arcanjo 270. (☎ 31-3551-4121).

The **Hotel Solar Nossa Senhora do Rosário** ($$$) is another of the best places in town, in a converted 19th-century mansion on Rua Getúlio Vargas, 270. The rooms are small but the hotel makes up for it in style. (☎ 31-3551-5200).

The **Solar da Ópera** ($$) is an elegant place just 100 yards from the Praça Tiradentes on Rua Conde de Bobadella, 79.



Hotel Arcanjo

Pousada Classica ($$) offers very good value, is clean, with good service and is conveniently located on Rua Conde de Bobadella, 96. (☎ 31-3551-3663).

The **Hotel Mirante** ($$) is cheap, comfortable and clean but about 1,000 yards from Praça Tiradentes on Rua Pandiá Calógeras, 377. (☎ 3551-2773).

Where to Eat

After a lot of walking around, take advantage of Ouro Preto's cheap and delicious traditional-style cooking. One of the best known places is **Chafariz** ($$), with a rustic self-service buffet on Rua São José 167 (☎ 31-3551-2828). Another famous place is **Casa do Ouvidor** ($$) on Rua Direita, 42, for lunch or dinner, serving traditional cuisine.

For lunch, there is a commendable feijão tropeiro ($) served in the restaurant at the **Chico Rei Mine** (see page 205). For an elegant option, try **Le Coq d'Ór** ($$), serving French cuisine with local accents at the Solar Nossa Senhora do Rosário (see *Where to Stay*). Last time I saw their wine cellar there were still a few bottles of Brunello di Montalcino. After dinner, take advantage of the excellent local cachaças for a nightcap – there are hundreds of good local varieties served at bars and restaurants around the historic district.

What to Buy

Soapstone

Ouro Preto has two well organized bazaars from 8 am to 6 pm. Here you will find replicas and decorative vases made from **soapstone**, an extremely fragile ornamental rock. Shipping back home may make sense but special packing arrangements are advised. There are also **agates**, **tourmalines**, **amethysts** and other types of stones for sale. Avoid buying "**emeralds**" on the street as they are almost certainly tourmalines. **Ceramics** are a good option, as are **textiles** or **woven goods**.

You can find a reasonable selection of **pewter** at the local shops in Ouro Preto, but if you are interested in high-quality pewter you should consider making a trip to Sao Joao del Rey and Tiradentes, where the factories are.

There are streets filled with shops, studios and galleries by local artists near the fairs and the main square. This is a good place to shop for **sacred arts**, some of which are antique. Fine **jewelry** is sold at several local shops on the other side of the main square from the fairs (look on Conde de Bobadella). A certificate of guarantee provides the shop's promise that you are getting what you pay for. A fun thing to do is custom-order your jewel. Shop around to find the better stones – the best craftspeople also tend to have the best stones. Get your quotes in writing specifying the weight of the stone and its description. Then, when you have chosen, ask them to make a jewel on the spot, with your choice of setting and backing, and a chain or brooch if you like. There are also shops on Tiradentes square. It will take about four hours to set your stone. The very best buys are Brazilian **amethysts**, **tourmalines** and **imperial topaz**. This golden yellow topaz is prized around the world and is mined only here and in Southern Brazil.

Tourmaline

Side-Trip

Mariana

Mariana is a town adjacent to Ouro Preto. You might prefer to stay in Mariana and visit Ouro Preto during the day. If you don't take the Trem da Vale scenic rail trip (see *Adventures*, above), getting here is easy by car. From Ouro Preto just take the main road Rua Maciel for about 7.2 miles/12 km to Mariana. Founded in 1696, Mariana is one of the oldest settlements in the country. As elsewhere in Minas, looking around requires comfortable shoes.

Igreja de Sao Francisco de Assis

The most prominent site is the **Basílica da Sé**, dating from the very early 1700s. Designed by Aleijadinho's father, this cathedral has a sacristy by Aleijadinho and painting by Athayde. There is organ music for the public on Friday and Sunday. There is also the impressive **Igreja de Sao Francisco de Assis** on Praça Minas Gerais. A local poet named Alphonsus de Guimarães once lived on Rua Direita, 35, which now houses a museum with the poet's private library and collection. A stop at the underground **Mina da Passagem** on your way in or out is recommended (see *Ouro Preto* for details).

The town itself is easy to explore on foot. It is not hard to find places where you can buy the types of handicrafts for sale in Ouro Preto, along with studios of local artists.

The cheap, but good, restaurant **Sinhá Olímpia** ($), on Rua do Boqueirão, 2, is close to the Mina da Passagem, serving local specialties (☎ 31-3557-5300). If you opt to stay the night, the best place in town is **Pouso da Typographia** ($-$$), a restored Colonial mansion on Praça Dr

Gomes Freire, 220 (☎ 31-3557-1311), though you might also like the comparable **Pousada Solar dos Corrêa** ($-$$), on Rua Josafá Macedo, 70 (☎ 31-3557-2080). For maps and additional information, the **Tourism Secretariat** (☎ 31-3557-9044) is in the middle of the historic district on Praça Tancredo Neves.

Reception area at Solar dos Corrêa

Tiradentes

- A charming and romantic Colonial getaway for couples
- One of the best places to find hand-made goods anywhere in Brazil
- Ride the historic Maria Fumaça narrow gauge train to São João Del Rey

Tiradentes, founded by gold prospectors in 1718, is one of the best known historical cities in Minas. Similar in many ways to the other cities in this section, the streets are more open and airy, with more trees and fewer hills. A bit closer to São Paulo and Rio than the others, the services and shops here tend toward the urbane, without losing the Colonial charm. More commercial than its historic sister cities, this is the place to shop for hand-made goods. It is also known for its good restaurants and cordial hospitality. Once known as Vila do São José, after the Portuguese prince Dom José, in 1889, less than one month after the royals gave up power, the town changed its name to Tiradentes in honor of the revolutionary dentist Joaquim José da Silva Xavier (known as the tooth-puller, "Tiradentes"). You can see a statue dedicated to him in a scenic grove of flowering trees at one of the city's parks.

Nestled in the plains at the foot of the São José mountain range, the town ran out of gold and began to decline, shifting toward agriculture as the coastal cities grew. Today this bucolic little town can fill up with road-trippers. Tourism is, for good reason, one of its main economic activities. Tiradentes is a fine place to spend a couple of days strolling the quaint cobbled streets, or enjoying the outdoors in the nearby São José range. It's also a romantic destination. Couples may enjoy themselves more than solo travelers, as there is no nightlife to speak of. If you want to see the countryside, an excellent option is to take the historic Maria Fumaça train to nearby São João Del Rei as a side-trip.

How to Get Here

Tiradentes, like the other cities in this section can easily be reached by car from the international travel hubs on the old royal gold route, called the Caminho Real. If you prefer not to drive, there are buses from the bus stations in each of these cities –

inquire per the listings in those chapters. The bus station in Tiradentes can be reached at ☎ 32-3355-1100. To drive from São Paulo, about 288 miles/480 km away, take Federal Highway BR 381 toward Belo Horizonte. At Nepomuceno, turn right on State Highway MG 265 until São João Del Rei. On the left, enter BR 265 for another nine miles/ 15 km or so to Tiradentes. From Rio de Janeiro, about 200 miles/ 335 km away, take Federal Highway BR 040 toward Belo Horizonte. At Barbacena, turn onto BR 265 toward Barroso, and take it another 30 miles/50 km to Tiradentes. From Belo Horizonte, 126 miles/210 km away, take Federal Highway BR 040 toward Rio. At Joaquim Murtinho, take BR 383 to São João Del Rei and from there take BR 265 another nine miles/15 km to Tiradentes.

Getting Around

The historic district is tiny and on foot is the way to get around – the farthest you might have to walk is about 20 minutes to the Maria Fumaça station. Once inside the perimeter of the historic district it can be virtually impossible to get around with a car anyway, especially on holidays. Some of the attractions are too far to walk comfortably so you might want to call a taxi (☎ 32-3355-1100) if you don't have a car, or ask where you are staying for help with transport options to avoid language problems. The town, which has only 5,000 residents, can be busy around weekends and major holidays but is generally a very safe place to visit.

For More Information

The Tiradentes municipal Tourism Secretariat (☎ 32-3355-1212) on Rua Resende Costa, 71, bordering the main square, Largo de Forras, is a good place to stop for maps or basic information about the town and its surroundings, but it seems to be open only in the afternoon. The three-story building is a historic landmark and easy to spot.

Sightseeing

The thing to do here is just to soak in the atmosphere. Every street has its charms but there are a few Colonial landmarks worth special mention. The main square, where there are dozens of horse-drawn buggies, is called **Largo de Forras**. This is a cheap and fun diversion. Nearby are plenty of restaurants, a few bars, shops and places to stay. Once used as a residence by freed slaves, the square was redesigned by the famous Brazilian landscaper Burle Marx. Just to the northeast is a scenic old stone bridge. To the southwest is a quiet square called **Largo do Sol**, where there are some flowering trees and the Tiradentes Monument, honoring the revolutionary dentist. If you walk behind the nearby Santo Antonio cathedral (see *Churches*, below)

Chafariz de São José fountain
(www.novomilenio.inf.br)

there is a path leading to the old colonial well, called the **Poço da Matriz**. This was what supplied the city with fresh water until the fountain called the **Chafariz de São José** was built in 1749. The fountain still works, with fresh water pouring from its stone gargoyle faces. With royal Portuguese arms and a cross on top, the fountain is on Rua da Chafariz (the long street that descends from the cathedral).

Museums & Cultural Centers

The **Centro Cultural Ives Alves** is on Rua Direita, 168, where events are held from time to time. Open every day but Tuesday from 10 am-6 pm.

The **Casa de Cultura** is a historical institute with archives of documents and a few works on display by modern Brazilian artists Portinari and Guignard. At Rua Padre Toledo (no number), the former monastic residence opens every day but Tuesday from 9 am-5 pm.

There is a museum called the **Museu Padre Toledo**. This was the home of the revolutionary cleric Carlos Correia de Toledo e Melo, who conspired here together with Tiradentes and the other Inconfidentes to overthrow Portugal's rule over Brazil. There are displays of period furniture and some works by Brazilian artists, including the Baroque master Manoel da Costa Athayde. There is a nominal fee to get in. The museum, on Rua Padre Toledo, 190, opens every day but Tuesday from 9 am-4 pm.

The **Museu de Arte Sacra** (Sacred Art Museum) is in the old town jailhouse, which burned down and was rebuilt. An ugly old building, in recent years it was opened as a museum. But the museum is worth a look inside for examples of traditional religious arts. On Rua Direita, it's open daily from noon to 5 pm, with a nominal entrance fee.

Historic Churches

Tiradentes lacks the large number of Colonial churches of Ouro Preto but still has quite a few, considering the small size of the town, including some very important ones. The churches and chapels here tend to be more modest than others in the His-

Museu de Arte Sacra
(www.saopaulominhacidade.com.br)

toric Cities, but they still call to mind the incredible wealth that flowed from Minas Gerais in the 1700s.

★★The **Matriz de Santo Antônio** is one of Brazil's most important cathedrals, with gold details and sculpted soapstone carved by the Baroque master Aleijadinho. It is hard to miss on its hill-top promontory and, if you visit only one church, this should be the one. There is an interesting sun dial in the courtyard that itself is a kind of local landmark, and a beautiful organ inside brought from Europe, which is hundreds of years old. The old town well is behind the church. There is a nominal entrance fee. On Rua da Câmera, it's open for visits from 8 am-5 pm every day.

Slaves were strictly segregated during the Colonial period, and the **Igreja de Nossa Senhora do Rosário** was their church. One of the oldest, thought to date from 1708, the church has frescoes on the walls. It is on Rua Direita, and is open every day but Tuesday from 9 am-4 pm, with a nominal entrance fee.

The **Santuário da Santíssima Trinidade** started out as a simple chapel, but today is one of the most beautiful churches in Tiradentes. It is at Praça Padre José Bernardino. Open daily from 8 am-5 pm, with a small entrance fee.

Adventures on Rail

★★The **Maria Fumaça** is a restored narrow gauge railroad dating from 1880 that links Tiradentes with the nearby city of São João Del Rei (see *Side-Trips*). The US-made Baldwin locomotive and 11 wooden railcars are antiques that have been carefully restored. The 7.8-mile/13-km railroad follows the Rio das Mortes, with a great view of the São José Highlands, making this a perfect way to see the countryside in comfort and style. The train runs Friday through Sunday and holidays, making two trips. It departs from São João Del Rey at 10 am and 3 pm, and returns from Tiradentes at 1 and 5 pm. The fare is about $10 round-trip. Contact the FCA railroad for more details (☎ 32-3371-8485).

Adventures on Horseback

There are well-run, guided horseback trips through the very scenic Serra de São José mountain range for two or three hours, costing $20-30 per person. Get in touch with **Cavalgada Cultural** on Rua Getúlio Vargas, 225A, in São João Del Rey (☎ 32-3373-2213, 32-3373-2200 or 32-3371-2296). They offer transfer to and from your pousada.

Where to Stay

At certain times of the year, such as the Harley Davidson festival on the last weekend of June, it can be difficult to find a room. Advance reservations are advised. Prices go up about 20% on weekends and holidays. The staff at the Tourism Secretariat (see *For More Information* above) can help you find a place to fit your budget and tastes. Here are some suggestions:

A room at Mãe D' Agua

Solar da Ponte ($$$) is an elegant 12-room pousada in a Colonial building with period décor, one of the nicest in town. Tea is served in the afternoon. At Praça das Mercês (☎ 32-355-1255; www.solardaponte.com.br).

For clean, basic accommodations right in the main square, the **Pousada Mãe D'Água** ($$) on the Largo das Forras, 5, is a good option (☎ 32-3355-1206; www.pousadamaedagua.com.br).

Bárbara Bela ($$) is cozy and charming with good value for the money if you don't mind the 10-minute walk into the historic district. It's close to the Maria Fumaça train station at Rua Herculano José dos Santos, 67 (☎ 32-3355-2345; www.pousadabarbarabela.com.br).

Where to Eat

Dining is pricier here than elsewhere in Minas due to the influx of wealthy tourists from São Paulo. The quality of restaurants is surprisingly good and there is plenty of variety given the size of the town, typically traditional Minas cooking or Italian. Many have their menus displayed in the Colonial window-fronts, and it's easy to find one you like. Following are some suggestions.

Atrás da Matriz ($$$) serves wood-oven pizza and delicious bacalhau, on Rua Santíssima Trindade, 201 (☎ 32-3355-2150).

For traditional cooking, the place to go is **Viradas do Largo** ($$), but it can be hard to get a table without reservations on the weekends. **Bar do Celso** ($-$$) is a simple place where a fine feijão tropeiro is served.

Spaguetti Cantina Italiana ($$), at Rua dos Inconfidentes, 140, serves pasta (☎ 32-3355-2457).

Theatro da Villa ($$$$) is one of the most elegant in town, on Rua Padre Toledo, 157 (☎ 32-3355-1275). **Restaurante Quinto do Ouro** ($$$) has self-service Tuesday through Sunday and wood-stove traditional cooking, on Rua Direita in front of the Ives Alves Cultural Center (☎ 32-3355-1197).

Spaguetti Cantina Italiana

What to Buy

$ Probably the best place in Minas Gerais to find hand-made goods, Tiradentes (and nearby São João Del Rey, see below) has something for all tastes. There are shops all over the historic district, many with similar kinds of goods. The best options are colorful textiles, silver and pewter, wooden carvings, ceramics, and leather goods.

Side-Trip

São João Del Rey

The historic center of São João Del Rey is just as nice as Tiradentes, and it is certainly worth a visit. General conditions for foreign travelers, however, are much better in Tiradentes, so it is listed here as a side-trip rather than a main destination. To get here by car, follow the directions for Tiradentes or, better still, take the Maria Fumaça (see *Adventures* above), which is an unbeatable rail trip. At the train station, dating from 1881, there is the **Museu Ferroviário**, on Avenida Hermílio Alves, 366, a museum dedicated to the history of rail that opens daily from 8 am-5:30 pm. Larger than Tiradentes, there are similarities in the historic district such as the Baroque churches and Colonial architecture. There is a **Sacred Art Museum** with examples of period arts on Praça Gastão da Cunha, 8, which opens from noon-5 pm every day but Monday.

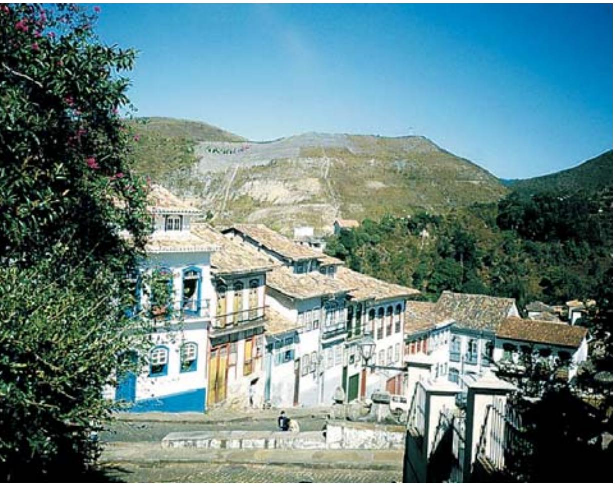
Some people come here simply to shop for high-quality pewter (called estanho), manufactured and sold here for a much better price than overseas – see the world-famous **John Somers Factory** at Avenida Leite de Castro, 1150, with a museum annex and shop (☎ 32-3371-8000). You might consider exploring the nearby countryside with **Vertentes Ecoturismo**, which offers guided horseback trips and nature walks, at Rua Padre José Pedro, 110A (☎ 32-3371-8235).

A very tasteful option for lodging here is the **Garden Hill Small Resort** ($$$) with a golf course, but it is 4.2 miles/seven km from the historic district (☎ 32-3371-2551; www.gardenhillgolf.com.br). For lunch or dinner, the **Pelourinho** ($$) at Avenida Hermílio Alves, 276, not far from the train station, has typical Minas Gerais dishes every day from 11 am-11 pm (☎ 32-3371-3593).

For more information, get in touch with the **Secretaria Municipal de Turismo** (☎ 32-3372-7338) at Praça Frei Orlando, 90, in the historic district, open Monday through Friday from 7 am-5 pm.

Diamantina

- Explore winding streets and Colonial landmarks
- Home of the Vesperata serenades and street festivals
- Visit the waterfalls and nearby ghost town of Biribiri



Diamantina is diamond country. Settled during the Gold Rush with the other Historic Cities, the region still produces precious stones. At 175 miles/280 km northeast of Belo Horizonte, the climate here is a bit dryer and the landscape looks more austere, like the high desert canyonlands of the Northeast Region (see *Chapada Diamantina* in Bahia). This sleepy little town is similar to Ouro Preto, with its Colonial stone architecture still preserved. Its location is a mixed blessing for travelers. Even though it takes a little longer to get here, Diamantina receives fewer visitors than its sister cities and maintains its Colonial atmosphere, without so many shops and hard-sell touts.

You shouldn't let the distance put you off. Getting here is not difficult by car and the charming cobbled streets and public squares with a "bohemian" street culture make for an interesting trip. The city has a reputation for the arts and especially the **Vesperata music recitals** at certain times of the year. There is as well as a permanent local community of artists, poets, and free thinkers who contribute to the charm. It is set in the Alto Jequitinhonha region at an altitude of 4,265 feet/1,300 m above sea level.

The climate is mild. There are heavy rains in January and the average temperature is around 22°C (71.6°F), with brisk nights. In the nearby region there are impressive natural rock formations like the **Gruta de Salitre**, waterfalls and streams where you can swim, an impressive stretch of Colonial road built by slaves, and rustic villas like **Biribiri** or **Curralinho** to explore (see *Adventures*, below). After working up an appetite, enjoy the wonderful local cuisine, famous around the country.

How to Get Here

Diamantina can be reached easily by car or bus from Belo Horizonte. The easiest route (with a lot of curves, so be careful) takes about three or four hours by car via Federal Highway BR 040 toward Brasília. About a half-hour past the town of Paraopeba, there is a circular junction marked toward Curvelo, and here you take BR 135. Upon leaving Curvelo, take BR 259 to Diamantina. You can also get here from Brasília in the Central West region, about 435 miles/725 km (nine hours) away. Take Federal Highway BR 040 toward Belo Horizonte. At Felixlândia, take the junction to Curvelo, and from there take BR 259 to Diamantina. Because of the travel time from Rio (nine hours) and especially São Paulo (11 hours), it may be easier to fly first to Belo Horizonte and then take a car or bus from there, unless stopping first at the closer Historic Cities to spread out the travel time. Check ahead as some hotels and inns in Diamantina offer transfer to and from the airport in Belo Horizonte (with or without a fee).

Getting Around

Getting around in the historic district is easiest on foot but a car is needed to access the surrounding trails and waterfalls. Some areas in town are closed to cars. As in Ouro Preto, there are some steep hills (such as to the bus station), so you might want a taxi if you are carrying bags. Comfortable shoes are recommended.

Festivals & Events

Diamantina has a long tradition of street serenades and in recent years this was formalized into the **Vesperata festivals**. This is a popular celebration that occurs at periodic dates from April to October, lasting from one to three weeks. A cobbled square on the street called Rua da Quitanda fills up with people who come here for wine and traditional snacks and to listen to the orchestral music played from the second-story balconies and door fronts.

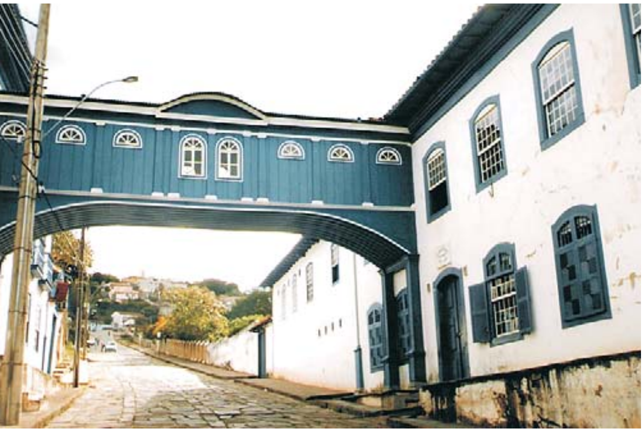
Sightseeing

If church-building was not as popular in Diamantina as in Ouro Preto, there are still dozens of ornamental historic churches to visit. The city has been declared World Patrimony by UNESCO for its well-preserved Colonial architecture. It's a pleasure just to wander around and take in the atmosphere. Here are some of the highlights.

Historic Churches

Church visitation hours are generally every day but Monday from 9-12 am and 2-6 pm (Sundays till noon), but not all historic churches in town open for visitation on regular hours. As these are houses of worship, appropriate attire is requested. The beautiful **Igreja Nossa Senhora do Carmo**, on Rua do Rosário, was built around 1765 for the high society in Diamantina. One of the most prominent churches in town (besides the immense 1940s-era cathedral), it has a gold-detailed pipe organ inside. The bell tower is on the far side of the church. **Igreja Nossa Senhora do Rosário dos Pretos** was built in 1731 for use by the town's many slave laborers. It is the oldest in town, on Largo do Rosário square. The small **Capela Senhor do Bonfim** was built prior to 1771 with many gold details, on the picturesque Rua do Bonfim.

Museums & Other Landmarks



Casa da Glória

The **Casa da Glória** is one of the most famous sites in Diamantina. It has two houses on either side of Rua da Gloria, connected by an enclosed walkway like a bridge. Formerly belonging to the Portuguese royals, the walkway between the houses was built in the mid-1800s. There is a geology center here. Open Tuesday through Sunday from 1-6 pm. Another important mansion is the **Casa de Chica da Silva**, the Colonial residence of Chica da Silva. Chica was a former slave who had a love affair with one of the richest men in town, the builder João Fernandes da Silva. As the legend goes, she became increasingly unpopular with the local aristocracy and fell into ruin when Fernandes left for Europe. The house is on Praça Lobo da Silva, opening Tuesday through Saturday from 12 am-5 pm and Sundays from 9 am-noon.

You might pass the **Casa de Juscelino Kubitscheck** without noticing that the simple residence was the childhood home of "JK," who would become one of the most prominent Presidents of Brazil. At Rua São Francisco 241, it opens every day but Monday from 9 am-5 pm. Diamantina's courthouse is in a historic mansion called the **Casarão do Fórum**. Once a private residence, the Colonial building is worth a look.

Casa de Juscelino

It is at Rua São Francisco de Assis. The old **Mercado Municipal** was originally built as a residence in the mid-1800s and later converted into a marketplace. There is a lot of atmosphere here, with a cultural center inside and every Saturday an arts and crafts fair, on Rua do Burgalhau.

The **Museu do Diamante** on Rua Direitan, 14, has exhibits on Colonial diamond mining, sacred art, weapons and other items. The building is notable as the residence of one of the rebellious Inconfidentes (see the historic city Ouro Preto for more details on this movement) who was exiled to Africa for attempting to overthrow the crown. Open Tuesday-Saturday from noon to 4:30 pm, Sunday from 9-11:30 am and 2-3:30 pm.

Adventures on Land

Hikes & Trails

★**The Gruta do Salitre** is an intriguing canyon with towering 250-foot-high cliffs that rise up out of the green, considered one of the "natural wonders" of Minas Gerais. Under the canyon walls are caves, some fairly deep. It is worth the trip for a brief hike, but you will need a car to get here. The canyon is about five miles/eight km from Diamantina on a mostly dirt road toward Extração. Head south on the highway to São Gonçalo and Milho Verde for about three miles/five km, then turn right on the dirt road toward Extração. Afterwards you can continue on another mile or so to the **Curralinho** district, a rustic villa with some historic churches and a man-made lake dating from the Colonial era. This is a relaxing and scenic place to look around for a bit or to have lunch or drinks after seeing the Gruta.

The **Caminho dos Escravos** is a paved Colonial road built by slaves during the Gold Rush to bring the wealth into Diamantina. There are still some preserved sections of the road, which are grim reminders of how much slave labor went into developing this part of the country and are definitely worth a look. There is not much to see here other than the road, however. The site is on BR 367 about three miles/five km east of town (toward Medanha).

Adventures on Water

Waterfalls & the Biribiri Villa

Cachoeira dos Cristais

The Alto Jequitinhonha valley where Diamantina is located, on the border of the Serra do Espinhaço range (see *Serra do Cipó* in this chapter), has hundreds of waterfalls pouring through the canyonlands. Some of the pools are dark because of the iron oxide in the water but they are safe to swim in (just be careful diving because it's hard to gauge the depth). There are at least a dozen falls well-known to the locals of Diamantina and surrounding settlements like Conselheiro Mata, but here are the main ones. There are two not far from the scenic ghost town of Biribiri. This little villa (which is privately owned) is a traditional stop for travelers to Diamantina and is now inhabited only by a handful of caretakers, with a few bars serving travelers. The villa was built in the 1870s around one of the first textile factories in the state, when the diamonds were running out and the region's economy was entering into decline. It lasted for about 100 years, but was shut down for good in the 1970s and has been converted into a kind of park. The **Sentinela falls** are north of town about four miles/seven kms on the highway toward Biribiri. This is the town's "beach" on the banks of a stream, with a small waterfall, and it's popular with the locals. A bit farther on, past Biribiri, about nine miles/15 km from Diamantina, is **Cachoeira dos Cristais** (or "Crystal Falls"). This is a perfect swimming hole. West of town on BR 367 (toward Belo Horizonte) about 1½ miles/2½ km is **Cachoeira da Toca**. Keep your eyes open for a car dealership near the entrance. From there it is a 10- or 15-minute walk to the 50-foot high falls, where you can swim.

Where to Eat

The **Capirão** ($), on Rua Campos Carvalho, 15, serves traditional Minas-style cuisine slow-cooked over a wood fire. Open for lunch and dinner every day. (☎ 38-3531-1526).

Grupiara ($) is a smaller place on Rua Campos Carvalho, 12 ,that serves traditional cuisine for lunch (plate by weight buffet) and dinner. (☎ 38-3531-3887).

For homemade pasta try **Trattoria La Dolce Vita** ($$) on Rua da Cariedade, 147, which opens for dinner every day but Tuesday and lunch on the weekends. (☎ 38-3531-8485).

The **Cantina do Marinho** ($), on Rua Direita, 113, serves both traditional and other Brazilian cuisine for lunch and dinner. (☎ 38-3531-1686).

Where to Stay

Lodging in Diamantina is simple, with breakfast included. It is a good idea to make reservations around major holidays and the Vesperata festivals (prices also go up 10-15% during those times).

POUSADA GAMELEIRA

The **Pousada Gameleira** ($$) is an elegant Colonial-style mansion-house inn on Rua do Rosário, downtown. (☎ 38-3531-1900).

The **Pousada do Garimpeiro** ($$) has clean rooms and a pool with an excellent restaurant open to the general public at Avenida da Saudade, 265 (☎ 38-3531-1044).

Diamante Palace ($$) offers good quality, basic accommodation with a pool on Av. Sílvio Felício dos Santos, 1050 (☎ 38-3531-1561) at the entrance to town.

The **Castelinho** ($) is a Colonial-style villa with rooms, tiny chalets and a pool. It's great if you don't mind the 800-yard walk into town. On Rua das Rosas, 65 (☎ 38-3531-1607).

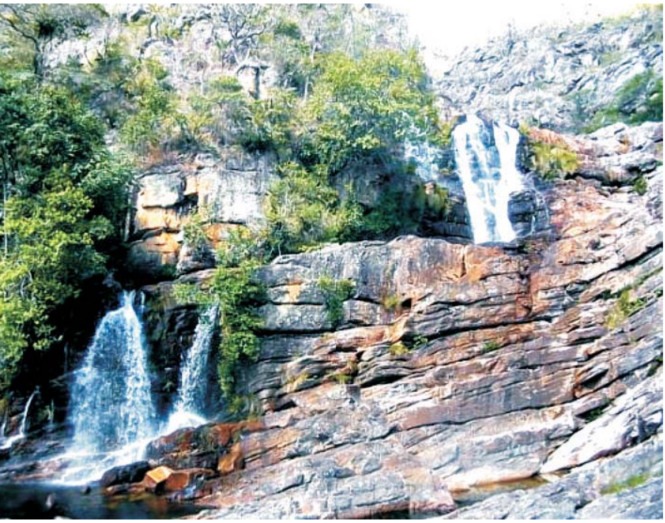
What to Buy

Diamantina is less commercial than its sisters and there are fewer options to buy local handicrafts. There is a rustic fair every Saturday at the **Mercado Municipal** (see *Sightseeing*) where you can find many of the same kinds of traditional handicrafts described elsewhere in this chapter. Be careful buying "diamonds" or any other precious stones off the street. Qualified vendors tend to have upscale shops and guarantee authenticity.

Serra do Cipó National Park

- The rugged canyon lands loved by Burle Marx
- Ancient cave and rock paintings from indigenous cultures
- Some of the best rock climbing in the Southeast region

The Serra do Cipó National Park is in the Espinhaço Mountain Range. This range extends from Ouro Preto (see the *Historical Cities*), northeast to Chapada Diamantina (see *Bahia* in the Northeast Region). Humans lived here as long as 10,000 years ago, leaving rock paintings in the



Waterfalls in Serra do Cipó National Park
(www.serradocipotourismo.com.br)

limestone caves you can visit. Modern explorers over the past 300 years have traversed this wilderness, starting with the peregrine bands of adventurers known as *Bandeirantes* in search of gold and precious stones. The notoriety of the region's mineral wealth attracted naturalists who were fascinated by the region with its unique ecosystems and endemic species, including thousands of flowers.

It was not until 1984 that the huge 128,000-acre/33,800-hectare National Park was officially established. The altitudes in the park range from 2,300 to 5,250 feet/700 to 1,600 m, with rocky spires jutting out of the earth and canyons. Famed Brazilian landscape architect Burle Marx claimed there was more biodiversity here than in the Amazon – whether it is true or not, the wildlife is still a compelling reason to visit. The region is rugged, with sharp quartzite mountains breaking the savannas and a highland tropical climate with an average annual temperature of about 21°C (70°F). Near the rivers, waterfalls and natural springs in the wooded areas are the best places to see wildlife such as deer, vinegar dogs (a small wild dog that gets its name from its reddish pelt), primates and the enormous South American rodent called the capybara. Higher up, the vegetation thins out and the terrain becomes mostly grassland. The park is best known for its hikes and trails, but the nearby region has rock climbing, horseback riding or canoeing down the Rio Cipó. The little town at the entrance of the park is called **Santana do Riacho**. If you are looking for a longer trek or just a day-trip, the region has the advantage of being close to Belo Horizonte.

How to Get Here

The park is 60 miles/100 km from Belo Horizonte in central Minas Gerais. The route is well marked along State Highway MG-10 from Belo, through the town of Lagoa Santa e Almeida until you reach a bridge over the Rio Cipó. At the time of writing there were road works underway to expand it, and caution was required. The park offices (☎ 31-3718-7228) are at Km mark 96 near Santana do Riacho, inward about 1.8 miles/three km along a dirt road. A car is needed here as there is no public transport in the park, but you can arrange transfer with the local guides. There are several buses per day leaving from the bus station in Belo Horizonte; one good choice is the **Saritur** (☎ 31-3419-1800) bus line. If you arrive by air at the **Confins International Airport**, it's only 30 miles/50 km away.

Planning Your Trip

Travel in the Serra do Cipó is most recommended during the dry season from April to October. The rest of the year can be drizzly. Most people hike on foot, but you can also get around on horseback or mountain bike (see below). The park hours are from 8 am-5 pm. The Ibama environmental agency limits visitors to 300 per day and charges a small fee to get in. The main attractions tend to have more people on weekends and major holidays so it is wise to make lodging plans in advance. Near the entrance of the park is a snack bar, plus rentals of bikes and horses. Comfortable lodging, good restaurants, and limited commerce are located outside the park.

In the winter, ticks are a common annoyance, and appropriate precautions are advised. Starting fires and removing or harming the wildlife or vegetation (especially the orchids) is prohibited. Boots or at least sturdy tennis shoes are necessary for the rugged terrain. Bring light clothes for day and a woolen sweater or jacket at night, and a towel and swimwear for the waterfalls. In the streams and waterfalls there can be sharp rocks right under the surface, so look before you dive in and watch out for flash floods. You can drink from the springs, but a canteen is advised. A flashlight is another good item to have with you. Some of the attractions nearby are on private property, and the owners charge a small fee. You can count on traveling at least 7½ miles/12 km (there and back) to the closest attraction from the park entrances. The region does not have banks and only very limited commerce. There has been some growth in recent years, but Serra do Cipó is still rustic, with about 2,500 residents in the vicinity. Take advantage of the rusticity by enjoying wood stove cooking and locally distilled cachaça in town.

For More Information

Not all the destinations in the park require guides, but locals are recommended as they are familiar with the region and can keep you from getting lost. Deep in the park in the higher areas, you are required to have a guide. My suggestion is to get in touch with **Tiago Cota**, with **Trekker Ecoturismo**. Their address is Rodovia MG 010 km 98 Serra do Cipó (☎ 31-2127-2330 or 31-9173-8139; www.trekker.com.br). Trekker offers a full range of bilingual services in the park such as two-day to eight-day trips, as well as ground transfers by special arrangement. In addition to Serra do Cipó, Trekker can also take you to other wilderness destinations in Minas such as the Parque do Caparaó, not included in this chapter, or on integrated tours to the Historical Cities.

Adventures on the Land

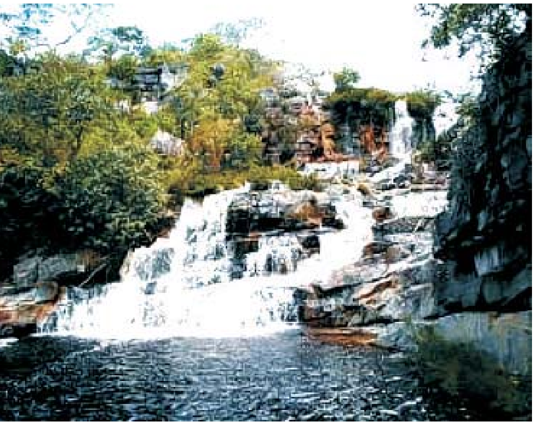
Mountain Biking

Bikes are available for rent at about $5 per day near the park entrance.

Horseback Riding

Horseback riding is a viable option for exploring the park and surrounding region, if you know how to ride. You can rent horses for about $5 a day near the park entrance, or check with the local guides for information on longer journeys. **Golden Lake** is a good option. It gets its name from the colors reflected by the sunlight.

Trekking


Canyon of the Bandeirinhas
(www.pisa.tur.br)

Local guides offer trekking services but you may need to bring your own equipment. There are several options, depending on how many days you want to spend. Some can be done in a single day. One of the most popular is the **Canyon of the Bandeirinhas**, an easy but long seven-mile/12-km trail (one-way). There are swimming holes in the deep gorges with imposing rock walls. A longer trek (a guide is required) is the **Vale do Travessão**, through fern forests and scrubby highlands, which has the option of an overnight in the valley, afterwards heading on a vigorous hike to the magnificent **Braúnas waterfall**, with a trip through the Canyon of the Bandeirinhas. Count on hiking about six miles/10 km per day, with refreshing dips at unspoiled waterfalls, and a chance to see indigenous cave paintings. This three-day, two-night adventure costs about $75 per person, including Jeep transport to the start of the trek, guide and food (extra snacks are advised). It is possible to arrange overland transport from Belo Horizonte directly with the guides for about $50 for up to four people (or a bit more for a van that can carry nine people). You can also hike the Vale do Travessão in one day, if you prefer.

Rock Climbing & Rappel

Serra do Cipó is one of the best known climbing spots in the state of Minas Gerais. The most popular routes are along the **Morro da Pedreira**, with limestone and marble faces about six miles/10 km from the park entrance on MG-010 northeast (go past the settlement of Cardeal Mota about 1.8 miles/three km, then left on a dirt road when the asphalt ends). The site is divided into four groups with well over 100 sites for climbing at all skill levels, including bouldering. You may need to bring your own gear. In the region there are also many caves, most of which only the locals know about. For rappel, the “big wall” or paredão is a 90-degree descent for 96 feet/30 m, with great views. A guided trip takes about two hours, and basic rappel skills are required. You have a full-day option if you also want to hike to a waterfall like **Capivara**. You can go cascading at some of the falls, such as the **Usina de Congonhas**, which requires a local guide and authorization from Ibama.

Adventures on the Water

Kayaking

You can kayak along the clear, calm waters of the Rio Cipó, which usually includes a light hike as well as nature observation (you may see capybaras), with swimming in the natural pools and waterfalls along the way. The kayak trips take from one to three hours and cost about $10 per person if you arrive by Jeep (insurance is usually included), but you can also spend a full day if you want to hike to some of the nearby waterfalls. Departure times are flexible – check with the guides listed above. At the time of writing the only destination was **Cachoeira Grande**. Ibama had closed Poço Azul for environmental reasons, but check with the guides as there were signs this destination was about to be re-opened.

Waterfalls

There are dozens of waterfalls to visit. The **Poço Azul** is considered one of the nicest, with easy access via about a mile hike (or on horseback or bicycle). A guide is not needed. At the time of writing, this destination was closed, however. **Farofa de Baixo** is a bit farther away, about 3.6 miles/six km, which you can do on foot, horseback, mountain bike or Jeep. It’s a moderate hike that doesn’t require a guide. A lot of visitors come here – check at the park offices. Better still is to hire a guide to take you to the top, **Farofa de Cima**, on foot or horseback, which is seldom visited, for an awesome view. The hike is strenuous though. **Andorinhas** is also a fairly rigorous hike (you can also get here on bike or horseback), 3.6 miles/six km, and requires a guide. Along the trail you will see rivers, forests and canyons leading to a double falls. **Gavião** is 3.6 miles/six km away (on the same trail as Andonrinhas), and

Véu de Noiva waterfall

requires a guide to get there on foot, bike or horseback. Outside the park, **Véu de Noiva** is a 224-foot/70-m waterfall along an easy 960-foot/300-m trail, at the Camping ACM northeast of the park along MG-010 (past Cardeal Motta on the right). Entrance is from 7 am-6 pm and costs a few dollars, with no guide required.

Where to Stay

There are good options for lodging, but on holidays and weekends call ahead to check availability. Most are clustered around the stretch of highway after the Rio do Cipó bridge (in the Cardeal Motta village region). One of the best is **Pousada Estalagem da Serra** ($), which has chalets or suites with a pool on state Highway MG 010 at the 97 Km marker (☎ 31-3178-7020). **Pousada Solar dos Ipês** ($) is an equally good choice with pool, charming setting, and leisure options, also at the 97 Km marker of MG 010 (☎ 31-2718-7272).

Where to Eat & Go Out

The restaurants are like the towns: tiny and rustic, but charming. They serve high-calorie, delicious comida mineira cooking sure to ward off the chill at night and replenish your batteries for more adventures. Don't miss the local cachaças, as there are two micro-distilleries in town. Locals, guides and visitors all seem to have their favorites, but here are some suggestions.

Restaurante Parador Nacional

Petras ($) has a good variety of regional specialties, with the quality you would expect of a restaurant in Belo Horizonte. Open for lunch and dinner every day with occasional live music shows at night. It is at the 97.5 Km marker on MG 010 (☎ 31 3718-7275). The upscale **Restaurante Parador Nacional** ($$$) serves international cuisine with a wine steward on call (☎ 31-9984-3278). It is next to the Santa Teresinha church (follow the signs), just off MG 010, and opens Friday through Sunday for dinner and on Sunday for lunch. Ask at your pousada if there are special discounts.

The Northeast

One of Brazil's greatest legacies is the heritage and natural beauty of the Northeast Region. Once little more than forgotten hinterlands, the Northeast today has a number of prosperous cities and amazing cultural diversity. Apart from the tropical warmth and the customary cordiality of the local population, it is difficult to generalize about the region. There are infinite variations on the cuisine, but it revolves around basic themes such as shellfish along the coast, rustic inland dishes, such as sun-dried beef (carne de sol), and manioc served everywhere in its various forms. The coastline offers mangrove and coconut groves, the beaches with different textures of sand, different water colors, some with dunes, some with coral reefs, some with transparent deltas and sand bars, some crowded, some deserted. Even the sunsets vary, with some beaches facing east and others north, but they are all spectacular. There is not a single city, state, or region, no single monument, fortress, or lighthouse that could represent the defining core of the Northeast region, and really no single visit can allow you to experience everything. Getting to certain places can be a challenge. Because the region is the poorest in Brazil, travel here requires a flexible mindset and a willingness to put up with minor inconveniences. The benefits are worth it.

Not every popular destination is covered in this book but that does not mean that they are not worth a visit for some travelers – Aracajú in Sergipe, Maceio in Alagoas and other places along the Northeastern coast have bustling beach resorts. This section does include the areas with the most compelling attractions, either for the culture, the history, or the natural beauty.

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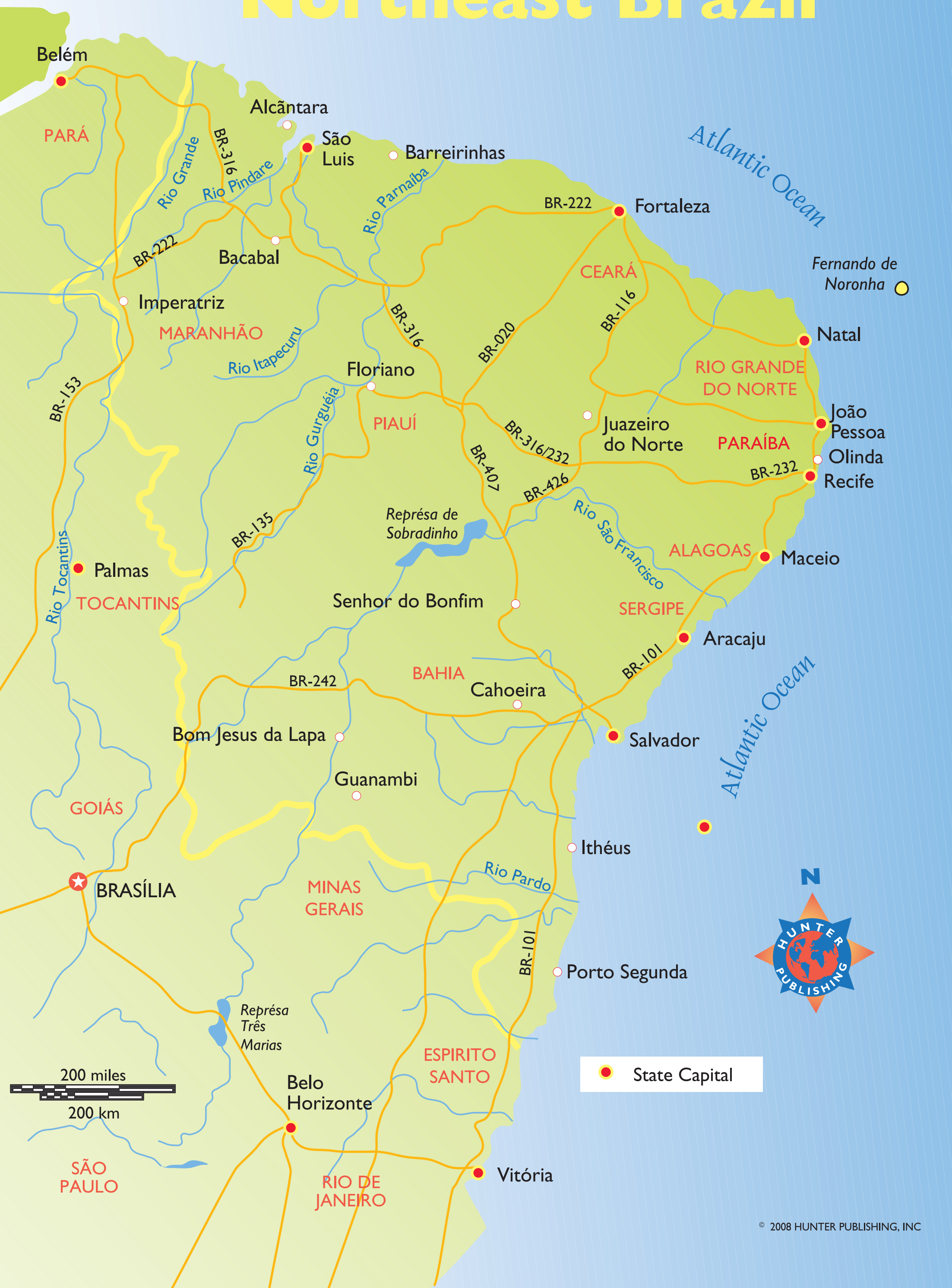
Northeast Brazil


Belém
PARÁ
Alcântara
São Luis
Barreirinhas
BR-316
Rio Grande
Rio Pindare
Rio Parnaíba
BR-222
Fortaleza
Atlantic Ocean
BR-222
Bacabal
Imperatriz
CEARÁ
Fernando de Noronha
MARANHÃO
BR-316
BR-020
BR-116
Natal
Rio Itapecuru
Floriano
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BR-153
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Rio Gurguéia
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PARAÍBA
BR-407
Olinda
BR-232
Recife
BR-426
Represa de Sobradinho
Rio São Francisco
BR-135
ALAGOAS
Maceio
Palmas
Rio Tocantins
TOCANTINS
Senhor do Bonfim
SERGIPE
Aracaju
BR-101
BR-242
BAHIA
Cahoeira
Atlantic Ocean
Bom Jesus da Lapa
Salvador
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How this Section Works

For convenience, this book divides the Northeast Region into three sections: the Lower Northeast, the Central Northeast, and the Upper Northeast. There are similarities among them all, but there are also striking contrasts within each state, and grouping them in this way helps to differentiate their subtleties. The region is bordered on the south by the sophisticated cities of the Southeast Region and on the north by the wild fringes of the eastern Amazonian region, even brushing up against the Central West, with its Cerrado landscape in one small area. In a sense, it touches all of Brazil and perhaps could even be called the "most Brazilian" region of Brazil.

The **Lower Northeast** includes grand old Bahia state, with its famous and sophisticated capital of **Salvador**, the site of much South American history, and a coastline dotted with spectacular beaches and inland destinations. In some ways, the region has almost as much in common with the Southeast as it does the Northeast, with its own distinct culture.

The **Central Northeast** includes **Pernambuco**, **Paraiba**, and **Rio Grande do Norte**. These are three smaller states with an incredible tropical coastline and fascinating Colonial history. Each has its own character and style and all are worth visiting.

Coastline in Paraiba

Finally, there is the **Upper Northeast**, which includes the more primitive regions of **Ceará**, **Piauí**, and **Maranhão** along the east-west axis of the Brazilian coastline. Travel here is the most difficult because of the lack of infrastructure and basic services but, to compensate, there are some amazing locations waiting to be discovered.

One thing in common to the whole region, from the whale sanctuary at Abrolhos in Bahia state to the Lencois Maranhenses in Maranahao state, is the tremendous natural beauty.

The region is also one of the cheapest to visit. You might notice as well there is an unhurried pace to life. Deciding where to go depends in part on how much time you have. If all you have is a day or two, then at least get to know Salvador. Three days is enough to see some other cities and beaches of the coast. Five days is enough to enjoy most of the adventures in this section. A month will allow you to see a little bit of everything.

Because of the travel time getting here, you should think about spending at least three or four days, or even seven to 10 days. That way you can visit the central or upper sections, and you'll have enough time to fully explore the area you've chosen.

Because there is so much diversity in this region, you might focus your trip according to the following categories.

Wildlife Sanctuaries

- Fernando de Noronha island sanctuary
- Abrolhos whale sanctuary

Natural Wonders

- Chapada Diamantina
- Lencois Maranhenses
- Serra de Confusoes

Coastal Resorts & Aquatic Sports

- Jericoacoara
- Dende Coast of Bahia
- Cocoa Coast of Bahia
- Rio Grande do Norte north or south coast
- Paraiba south coast

Desert Adventure & Land Sports

- Pernambuco
- Paraiba
- Rio Grande do Norte
- Ceara
- Piaui
- Maranhao

Culture & Nightlife

- Salvador
- Recife & Olinda
- Joao Pessoa
- Natal
- Fortaleza
- Sao Luis

Tips for Exploring the Northeast

ADVICE
ADVICE

There are a few things to keep in mind about the Northeast. First is the climate. Generally hot, the region runs on its own slow rhythm (except at night in the cities where there is usually some energetic dancing throughout the week).

The intense cultural life of the Northeast ranges from the violeiros of the interior of Paraiba, who sing improvised poetry for hours on end, to the fiery, whirling acts of street daring in Recife, or the rounds of *capoeira* – the Afro-Brazilian fighting dance of Salvador.

The smaller cities like João Pessoa and Natal are no less engaging, with good restaurants, exotic side-trips, nearby indigenous villages and fine resorts. Each of these regions has well-made local crafts, and some are of exceptional value and quality.

Another recurring theme is the spectacular coastline.

If you enjoy prowling over the ruins of Colonial battlegrounds with rusted cannons, paddling a kayak through mangrove swamps, gobbling a lobster on the shore, or simply checking out the surf by a coconut grove away from it all, this is the region for you. The same is true if you like to rough it a bit in the wild desert with hot wind and flies.

It is not without coincidence that the region claims some of Brazil's best humorists, writers, singers, poets and politicians. If the business of show business is in the Southeast, its inspiration is certainly here in the Northeast.

Climate & Ecology

The Northeast Region has basically two seasons, the wet summer and the dry winter. Both seasons are hot, with annual average temperatures in the 26-28°C (79-82°F) range, and considerably hotter at certain times of the year.

Tropical rainforest

There are basically two types of biospheres throughout most of the region – the desert and the tropical rainforest. The entire coast, to some degree, is still the original, tropical Atlantic rainforest. In some areas, like the sub-equatorial deserts of the Upper Northeast, that were rainforests 10,000 years ago, there are phenomenal vestiges of a climate in change. Inland there is a different environment, that of the Caatinga and the Sertão, the dunes, and a swath of intermediary lands used for growing sugar cane, palm, fruit, row crops and cattle. The soil here explodes to life just once a year, green and flowering from April to June, before the harsh browns and grays take over again, and if you are lucky enough to be in the region at that time you should check it out for at least a day-trip.

Because of Brazil's bend in the coastline, there are points that look both eastward and northward out to sea. Geographically and culturally, parts of the region have closer ties to Africa than much of Latin America.

Mandacaru
(www.georgetur.com.br)

Inland there are trees and shrubs, as well as cactus, thriving in oases near natural springs or created reservoirs. The king of the desert is the magnificent *mandacaru* and you will also see the *xique-xique*, and fruit trees such as cashew or the *umbu*. Ask locals to point out the *acacia* or the *juazeiro* tree, other great symbols of the *sertao*.

Wildlife is easier to spot in the rainy season, and you might see a blue macaw, one of the immense South American bullfrogs adapted to the heat, or dozens of varieties of enormous lizards. There are snakes and turtles in abundance. There are some venomous reptiles and scorpions in the badlands, so a local guide familiar with the hazards is useful in some regions. There are also land mammals, such as armadillos, wildcats and foxes, that you can spot more easily at night, even from a Jeep.

The Northeast has thriving resorts of international fame. Many are still secluded and well tended, and the central coast particularly is starting to open up exciting possibilities. It also has areas that call to mind a previous century.

When planning your trip, make no mistake – the Northeast represents one of Brazil's most destitute areas, afflicted by drought, with a steep drop between the level of services available in the cities and those in the Caatinga or remote coastal areas. Problems, delays, and inconveniences can and do occur.

If this is not your first visit, welcome back. You may be surprised at how much has changed in the past few years. Check out some of offerings on the central coast, or the revival underway in the cities, or brush off your traveler's Portuguese and explore a region that may just have received electricity, cell phones and Internet.

Blue macaw

Once upon a time it was common to travel the Northeast with a hammock because there were no beds. Times have changed, and while you can still find places like that, there are also more options today than ever before. Whether you seek luxury or want to rough it to see the "authentic" Northeast, there are adventures in this section for you.

Caatinga: an Enchanting Landscape

The special climatic zone called the Caatinga has plant and animal species found nowhere else. The Caatinga badlands cover roughly 7% of Brazil, in states like Minas Gerais, Bahia, Pernambuco, Paraiba, Rio Grande do Norte, Ceará, Piauí and Maranhão. The desert has rainfall of only eight-40 inches/200-1,000 mm per year, but when the rain does fall, it rains continuously for up to a month, showering the landscape with green. Average annual temperatures are 77°F/25°C and don't vary much throughout the year. The region is so spiny and inhospitable that cattlemen even today use heavy leather suits that for centuries have been the vaqueiro's armor against the vegetation of the desert, here called the sertão. During the hottest months, temperatures can soar to 140°F/60°C on the ground, baking out the roots of all but the hardiest plants, leaving husks and spines. When the rains come, the parched gullies trickle with life again and the region sprouts in bursts of color that is nearly unrecognizable. The entire region turns green for a month or two. The inhabitants of this stark and beautiful region are the sertanejos, who suffer from drought and have among the lowest literacy and income levels in the country. Nearly all the settlements today have reservoirs called acudes, some of which date from the Imperial days. The largest park with Caatinga is the Serra dos Confusoes in remote Piaui state, including its stark rock formations and gigantic plateaus.

The Lower Northeast

Salvador

- Historical intrigue blends with contemporary charm
- Learn African warrior arts called *capoeira*
- Visit the Pelourinho and the historic district

Salvador is one of Brazil's top destinations for beaches and cultural life. The rich Colonial past dotted Salvador with churches and fortresses, giving this colorful city a romantic backdrop. The tropical climate, easy-going style of the baianos and baianas, and sultry nightlife make Salvador immortal in the Brazilian imagination.

The most striking thing about the city, apart from the beauty of the **Todos dos Santos Bay**, is the distinct upper and lower cities. Due to a geographic accident and the strategic importance of the useful cargo port, Salvador's upper city is connected to the port by a vertical people-mover called the **Lacerda Elevator**, which gives a good view of the immense bay, from which the colony Bahia got its name.

Salvador is also the capital of Afro-Brazilian culture in Brazil, with contributions to world culture such as the *Candomblé* religion observed in curious synchronism with the Catholic religion, where saints each have two roles and two aspects. It is like this as well with the *caipoeira* ritual fighting-dance, where slaves gathered to "dance" while secretly practicing African warrior arts and keeping their language and history alive through chanting to the rhythm of the eerie *berimbau* – a bow-like percussion instrument.

Lacerda Elevator

One of the strongest characteristics of Salvador is its unique blend of cultures, interlaced with South American indigenous tradition, the strong link to Africa, and the distinct "old world" sumptuousness of the architecture, superimposed over the natural beauty of the region.

Colonial history began when Portuguese explorer Tomé de Souza built up Salvador da Bahia in 1549 as the Governor-General of the Brazilian colonies shortly after the arrival of Europeans. Salvador claims to have the only truly medieval castle in Brazil from this period.

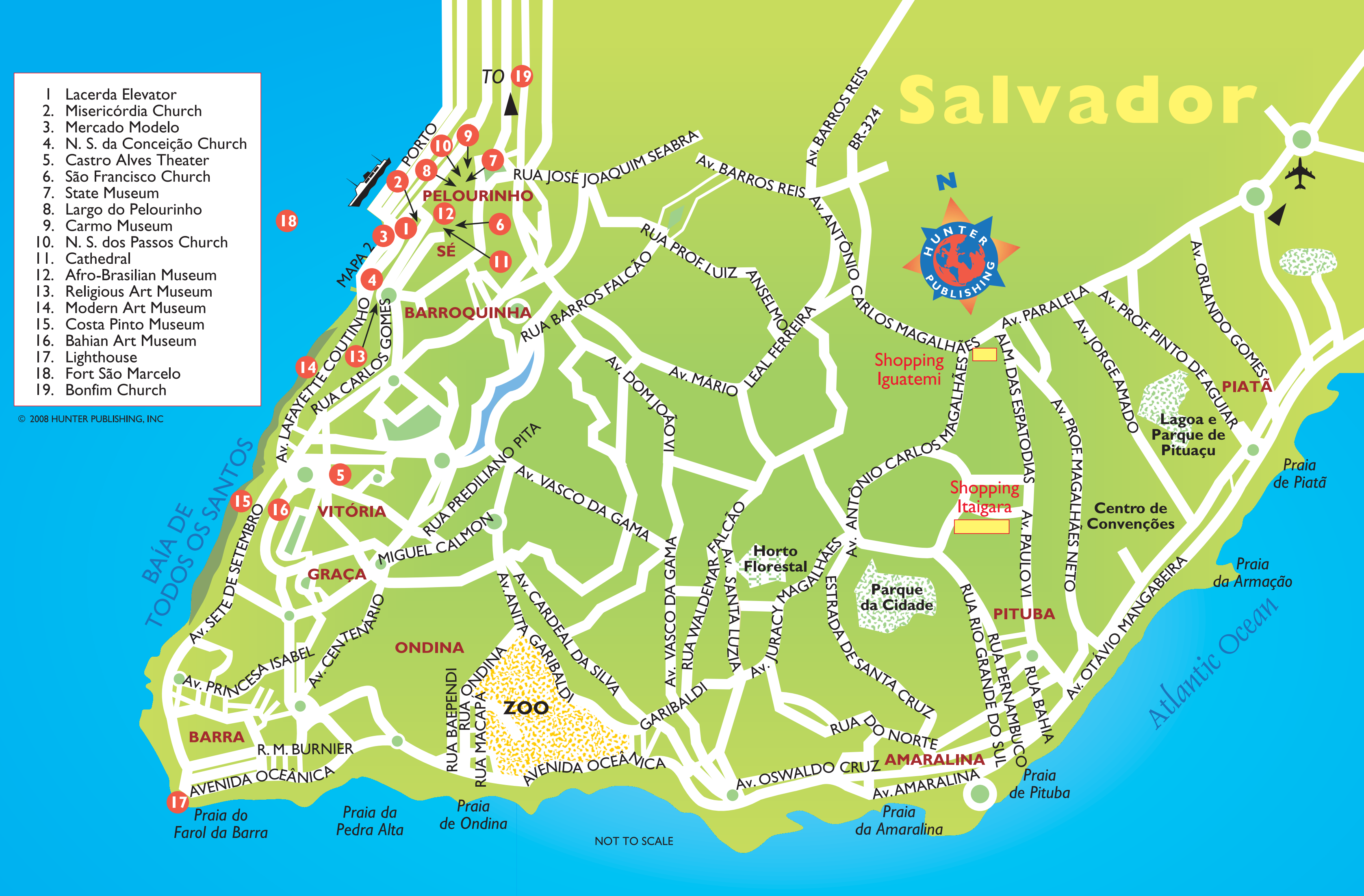
Centuries of conflict between the Dutch and the Portuguese led to the constant fortification of the vital Colonial port in Salvador, strategically positioned to begin exploring the southeastern part of the South American continent.

Most people want to enjoy the beaches, and if this is your goal you might consider one of the excellent resorts or side-trips to the Coconut Coast, a day-trip to Itaparica Island or even catch a ferry or single-engine air-taxi to whisk you to the Dendê Coast for a two- or three-day side-trip.

While in Salvador, you may find that the greater attractions are the historic or cultural sites, but there is plenty to do outdoors.

Scuba diving is a good option in Salvador, with its legacy of shipwrecks left by Colonial battles (there are more wrecks here than anywhere else in the world) or, if you prefer above-water fun, there are hydrofoil excursions to the islands of the bay. Or head inland to Chapada Diamantina if you have a few days extra.

For colorful folklore, there is no better place than Salvador, even more than Recife. And prepare yourself for delicious local cuisine like tradi-


Salvador
1 Lacerda Elevator
2. Misericórdia Church
3. Mercado Modelo
4. N. S. da Conceição Church
5. Castro Alves Theater
6. São Francisco Church
7. State Museum
8. Largo do Pelourinho
9. Carmo Museum
10. N. S. dos Passos Church
11. Cathedral
12. Afro-Brasilian Museum
13. Religious Art Museum
14. Modern Art Museum
15. Costa Pinto Museum
16. Bahian Art Museum
17. Lighthouse
18. Fort São Marcelo
19. Bonfim Church
TO 19
PORTO
MAPA 2
PELOURINHO
SÉ
BARROQUINHA
VITÓRIA
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Av. PROF. MAGALHÃES NETO
Av. PAULO VI
Av. OTÁVIO MANGABEIRA
RUA RIO GRANDE DO SUL
RUA PERNAMBUCO
RUA BAHIA
ESTRADA DE SANTA CRUZ
RUA DO NORTE
Av. OSWALDO CRUZ
Av. AMARALINA
Av. JURACY MAGALHÃES
Av. SANTA LUZIA
RUA WALDEMAR FALCÃO
Av. VASCO DA GAMA
GARIBALDI
Av. CARDEAL DA SILVA
Av. ANITA GARIBALDI
AVENIDA OCEÂNICA
RUA ONDINA
RUA MACAPÁ
RUA BAEPENDI
RUA PREDILIANO PITA
MIGUEL CALMON
Av. CENTENÁRIO
Av. PRINCESA ISABEL
R. M. BURNIER
Av. SETE DE SETEMBRO
Av. LAFAYETTE COUTINHO
RUA CARLOS GOMES
BAÍA DE TODOS OS SANTOS
Atlantic Ocean
Praia de Piatã
Praia da Armação
Praia de Pituba
Praia da Amaralina
Praia de Ondina
Praia da Pedra Alta
Praia do Farol da Barra
NOT TO SCALE

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tional *moquecas* (fish stew) with dendê oil and *sopadas* with coconut milk, made from fresh fish and crustaceans, or the *acarajé* dried-shrimp and fried bean-dough treat sold in humble street stands that draw illustrious clients.

Enjoying Salvador

Itapuã lighthouse & beach

The best thing about the city is that there are so many options. You won't want to miss the **Pelourinho** and the **market district**, but it's also worthwhile to zip around the coast to the **Itapuã lighthouse** to sip a coconut and admire the view.

Salvador is a city that has enchanted artists for centuries and remains today a prolific center for the arts and popular culture.

While geared to the flowered-shirt wearing tourist trade more than other cities of the Northeast, it does not lose site of its renowned artists such as Carybé and Tati Moreno, the photographer Pierre Verger, and musicians loved around the world like Dorival Caymmi, Maria Bethânia, Gal Costa, and many others.

The booming *axé* musical style with its heavy percussion and tropical march is the most typical sound during Carnival, which brings millions of party-goers to the streets for dancing, but the city also is famous for its *samba-de-roda*, the roots of samba derived from percussion, and *maculelê*, a group of men who sing in dialect to stirring percussion with sticks, which is sometimes associated with the capoeira fighting-dance, and *lambada*. One of the best places to experience all of this is at the **historic district** of the city, a must stop for any visit.

Senhor do Bonfim

You will notice here a laid-back pace in virtually everything from the preparation of the food to the rhythm of speech. Speaking of the language, the speech here is so distinct to the region that you may have to learn a special vocabulary. *Baianos* are the people of Bahia, and *Soteropolitanos* are the locals from Salvador.

Judging by the 365 Catholic churches, one for each day of the year, you cannot mistake the deep spirituality of the local residents. The most important is the **Senhor do Bonfim**, reputed to have great mystical powers.

The saints' days are observed throughout the week in tandem with *candomblé*, a traditional religion of Africa. You can even see some of these ceremonies at centers called *terreiros*, the most famous ceremony being the *Gantois*.

How to Get Here

The **Deputado Luis Eduardo Magalhães International Airport** in Salvador is 21 miles/35 km from the center of town. If you arrive by bus or wish to go to other cities, the bus station (*terminal rodoviario*) is at Avenida Antonio Carlos Magalhaes in the Pituba neighborhood. This or the airport is a place to store luggage if need be.

Getting Around

Salvador is unusual for its hills, cliffs, valleys and plains that contribute to the distinct layout of the upper and lower cities, which are linked by elevators, ramps, and staircases. Salvador is a modern city with good hotels and nightlife. It is a good idea to make reservations ahead of time as rooms can be scarce (though it pays to ask for a discount in low season).

When visiting churches and candomblé grounds and theaters, you will be expected to wear long pants/dress or jeans and avoid beachwear. Shirts are required in most restaurants and shops. Bring light, comfortable clothing and a hat might be welcome on the sunny days. The rainy season is June to August. Use tennis shoes rather than sandals because the crowds can be pretty thick, especially during Carnival.

Salvador has new street signs for tourists that make it a lot easier to get around on your own, but traffic is still hectic for the uninitiated. If you try to park downtown pesky *flanelinhas* will appear to demand small change. Taxis are recommended. An option for getting around is the air-conditioned microbus, which runs along the coastline from Praça da Sé (see *Pelourinho historic district*, below) to Centro, passing close to most of the major hotels. They also pass by the airport. Cost is about a dollar – just flag it down.

Taxis switch the meter to 2 ("bandeira dois," 20% higher price) for three passengers, at night and on holidays. The taxi cooperative **Cometas** (☎ 71-3244-4500 or 71-3377-3483) is reasonably efficient. Another good service is **Radio Taxi** (☎ 71-3243-4333). For safety, use only registered cabs in the city (with identification fixed to the window).

If you plan to take a boat to other destinations in Bahia such as Morro de São Paulo or Itaparica Island, you depart from the Nautical Center in the Lower City.

For car rentals **Lupa Rent a Car** offers pick-up with or without drivers, at Rua Anquises Reis, 81, in the Tropicalia Building, room 101, in

Jardim Armação (www.luparentacar.com.br; ☎ 71-461-2000). **VIP Rent a Car** offers cars with or without drivers and airport transfer. Avenida Otávio Mangabeira, 1020, in the Pitaçu neighborhood (www.viprentacarbahia.com.br; ☎ 71-461-1000 or 71-9114-8335). At the International airport, options include **Avis**, **Hertz** and **Localiza**.

Safety Tips

Salvador requires precautions normal for any major Latin American city. The Pelourinho is heavily guarded, but pickpockets or snatchers are still active, especially on Sundays and Tuesdays when the crowds get thick. The crowds are very congenial, so don't be afraid to join in the fun. At night in the Lower City take cabs and avoid the area called Baixa do Sapateiro. Avoid deserted streets and darkened areas at all times. Don't bring expensive photographic equipment to the beach. Your hotel can give you information about safety conditions and specific locations nearby to avoid, if any. Tourists tend to stand out here and are therefore frequent targets. Also keep in mind that, due to the tropical climate, it is generally a good idea to drink plenty of fluids, and watch what you eat on the street.

For More Information

The **Secretariat of Tourism** (**Emtursa**) offers information via Internet (www.emtursa.ba.gov.br) or phone (☎ 71-3380-4200). At the International Airport, the Lacerda Elevator and at two mobile stands that move around the main tourist destinations you can get Emtursa info. **Bahiatursa**, the Bahia State Tour Board, has posts at the Bus Station (☎ 71-3370-8400), the Mercado Modelo (☎ 71-3241-2893), the International Airport (☎ 71-3204-1244 or 71-3204-1444), the Pelourinho (☎ 71-3321-2133 or 71 3321-2463), and the Lacerda Elevator (☎ 71-3321-2697).

The ***Guia do Ócio*** is a monthly city guide available for about a dollar at newsstands and free at hotels. It is mostly in Portuguese, but there is an English section and the guide is packed with event listings and tips. The website, www.carnaxe.com.br, is in Portuguese, but has everything you need to know about the local Carnival.

Carnival

The *Guiness Book of World Records* claims Salvador's carnival is the biggest street party in the world Well over two million partiers take to the streets, dancing in an explosion of spontaneity and chaos.

A little explanation is required to make sense of the Carnival in Salvador – really unlike anything on the planet. The most important part of the festival (or at least the hardest to ignore) are the flat-bed trucks with

Carnival parade in Salvador

huge loudspeakers that roll through the streets with the party swarming around them. These noisy vehicles are called *trios elétricos*, and get their name from the Portuguese word for the three-pronged electric plugs used to power the sound systems. The wall-shaking music too has a special name that originally comes from one of the many African words still used in Bahia – axé. The first trio elétrico, or simply "trio," debuted in 1950 when a radio techie named Adolfo Nascimento and a mechanic named Osmar Macedo decided to transform a Ford flatbed truck into their own star of Carnival (for more about this subject, see *Abaeté Park*, below). In the 1980s one of these trios made history by drawing a crowd of 100,000 people, helping to turn this musical event into a permanent part of Brazilian culture.

The main trios are **Batatinha**, which starts in the Pelourinho and goes down Rua Chile, **Osmar**, which goes from Campo Grande to the Castro Alves square, and **Dodo**, which starts in Ondina and follows along the coast to the Barra Lighthouse.

The "blocos," or fraternization groups, have loyal followers who dress in the same outlandish costume called the "abadá," perfect for the lunacy of the occasion. Bahia's African ties are seen in the Carnival groups that gather every year, with impressive percussion, starting in the Pelourinho (where Olodum gathers) or the Lower City where the elegant Sons of Ghandi and the enthusiastic members of Ilê Ayê converge around the Praça Castro Alves, which is the heart of the Bahian Carnival.

To take part in the fun you have two options. To join the blocos, you must purchase your costume (and a wristband that you must not lose!) ahead of time and they can be pretty expensive, or you can just pipocar or "popcorn" your way on the outside of the blocks (which are cordoned off), which is what most people do. If you opt for the popcorn route, petty theft is common, so be careful with your expensive cameras, watches, and jewelry. Use light, comfortable clothing, and tennis shoes rather than sandals because the crowds can be pretty thick. Also be careful what you eat from street vendors because of the heat. *Oba*!

Other Festivals

The **Festival of Conceição da Praia** on December 8 is dedicated to the patron saint of Bahia, and is a state religious holiday. The festival takes place at the Basilica of Nossa Senhora da Conceição da Praia, in the Lower City.

The **Festival of Bonfim** on the second Thursday of January is the largest street festival in Bahia. Thousands clad in white follow a procession from the Basílica da Conceição da Praia to the Sacred Hill (Colina Sagrada), more than five miles/eight km away. *Mães santas*, or "holy mothers," as the female leaders of the candomblé religion are known, wash the church grounds with vases of water and flowers at Church of Bonfim.

The following Monday, the **Festival of Ribeira** eclipses the festival of Bonfim, and the stalls and street party at Bonfim are transferred to Ribeira – this festival is reminiscent of Carnival with *trios eletricos* and percussion.

The **Yemanjá Festival** takes place Feb 2. This is traditional candomblé ceremony for the *orixá*, or spirit, of the sea. The most famous ceremony in Salvador is in the Rio Vermelho neighborhood. Women in white bring offerings of flowers, costume jewelry, mirrors and other items in decorated boats, set afloat by the men amid chants and prayers. Yemanjá tends to be depicted as very proud of her beauty with flowers in her hair and a mirror in hand, sometimes represented as a mermaid. Following the public religious ceremony, there is a secular party that draws a huge crowd, with dancing, music, food and drink stalls spread out over the beach.

In Bahia this is called a "festa de largo" or street party, and it is one of the few without t*rios eletricos,* blocos, or other big attractions that normally draw a huge crowd. The festival starts in the morning, and hits full swing by 4 pm.

If you can, try to fit a Tuesday in because every week it's **Saint Anthony´s Day** at the Pelourinho (with 6 pm blessings at the churches of São Francisco and Nossa Senhora do Rosário dos Pretos). This is also a candomblé festival. Later, locals gather on the cobble streets and drink *cachaça com cravo*, clove-steeped sugar cane liquor with lime and honey. The Olodum percussion group meets at 7 pm to midnight in Rua Gregório de Mattos with a small fee for dancing displays and musicians circulating.

Sightseeing

Just wandering around is one of the best things to do in Salvador if you feel like soaking up some local culture. Following are some suggested locations.

Parks

If you feel like jogging or want to take a break from the Pelourinho and historic districts, you can spend a few hours getting some sun by strolling around Salvador's parks.

Abaeté Park surrounds the Abaeté Lagoon, with strikingly dark waters and white dunes. Kiosks serve green coconuts, sugar cane juice, acarajé and sweets. Here you can also visit the Music House (Casa de Música), where the 1929 Ford converted into the world's first trio eletrico is enshrined, on Avenida Dorival Caymmi (☎ 71-3285-0467).

Tororó Dike

Pitaçu Park, next to Pitaçu Beach, has the Mário Cravo cultural center with local artwork. The park is carefully tended with kiosks and acarajé vendors and the lagoon is surrounded by a six-mile-long cycling track at Avenida Jorge Amado (☎ 71-3363-5859).

The **Tororó Dike** (Dique Tororó) is worth a look. This National Historic Landmark has a jogging path around a lagoon and a floating stage for shows and presentations. In the middle of the lake are sculptures of the candomblé deities, the Orixás, designed by the artist Tati Moreno and one of the famous Salvador landmarks.

Lacerda Elevator

(G. Frysinger)

Lower City: Solar de Unhão to Ribeira

The Lower City (Cidade Baixa) is best visited during the day. This is Salvador's busy port area and marina, called Comercio (which is where you catch the ferry to Itaparica island or other destinations), and includes the residential districts of Ribeira and Mont Serrat, where people also go to hang out. Nearby are many of the famous sites like Mont Serrat Fortress, the Lacerda Elevator, Mercado Modelo, and the mystical Igreja do Bonfim, plus some nice restaurants along the waterfront.

★The **Lacerda Elevator** (Elevador Lacerda) is cool. Antônio Lacerda built the 236-foot/72-m elevator tower in 1873 to link Tomé de Souza plaza in the Upper City to Praça Cairu in the Lower City. It is said to be the only elevator of its kind. Originally mechanical, it was given electric motors in 1907 and then in 1930 was totally reformed. Four cabins whisk up and down in 30 seconds. It costs under a dollar. Although the elevator is a tourist attraction, it is used by just about everybody and remains an authentic Salvador landmark. It runs from 5 am to 12 pm every day.

★★★**Mercado Modelo** is one of the main attractions in Salvador. One of the most famous monuments in the city is the Fountain here on Praça Cairu, the first thing you see from the port. Built by the designer Mário Cravo, the monument marks the site where the old Mercado Modelo stood prior to the ruinous blaze that destroyed it. This huge market dates back to 1861, as much a living museum of contemporary Bahian culture as it is a place to shop. Everything for sale here represents the Northeast: colorful woven hammocks, jewelry, the weird gourd-like bow-shaped instruments used in capoeira, called berimbaus, silver, ceramics, wooden carvings, typical preserved pumpkin and coconut, clothing, medicinal plants, dolls, and many other curiosities – among them the traditional Bahian clenched fist talisman called a figa, carved in wood or stone. The same gesture, with the thumb clenched between the index and middle fingers, is supposed to ward off bad luck. The scent of red palm oil wafts in the air, while the eerie strumming of the berimbau vibrates nearby as capoeria fighters practice flips and kicks against the backdrop of the Todos dos Santos Bay.

Two restaurants and bars ($$) serve Bahian food, drink, and snacks. As a tourist, you will likely be overcharged by someone at some time. Do as the locals do: offer half what you think the thing is worth and haggle with a smile. The market opens from 9 am to 7 pm Monday through Saturday and on Sunday from 9 am to 1 pm, at Praça Cairú in the lower city. Besides the Lacerda Elevator, practically any bus in the lower city stops at the Mercado Modelo. ☎ 71-3241-2893.

The **Nautical Center**, next door on Avenida da França, is where you go to catch a boat or catamaran to Itaparica Island, Morro de São Paulo, and bay excursions. If you walk a little farther in the other direction from the Mercado Modelo along Avenida do Contorno, toward the Solar do Unhão, you can reach the Bahia Marina, which has a beautiful view of the Todos os Santos Bay and a restaurant and bar open every day but Sunday.

★★The **Solar do Unhão** at Avenida Lafayette Coutinho is an architectural complex that includes a former sugar mill, chapel, and Colonial manor that contains the Museum of Modern Art and a restaurant with a folk dancing show (Monday through Saturday, 9 pm). The show costs about $10 per person. Outside there is an intriguing sculpture park. The Antônio Conselheiro Monument is one of the best-known statues in Salvador, honoring a revolutionary who starved to death in prison in 1897 (☎ 71-3329-0660).

Museums in the Lower City

The **Modern Art Museum of Bahia** (Museu de Arte Moderna de Bahia) has works here by artists such as Tarsila do Amaral, Portinari, Di Cavalcanti, Rubem Valentim, Carybé and others that make it worth the trip. Avenida Contorno, at the Solar do Unhão, in the Comércio neighborhood. Opens Tuesday through Friday from 1 to 9 pm, and weekends from 2 to 7 pm. (www.mam.ba.gov.br (☎ 71-3329-0660).

The **Cocoa Musem** has exhibits on the fruit that was once Bahia's main resource. Open Monday through Friday 9 am-5 pm. Rua da Espanha in Comércio. By the way, the fruit, called *cacau*, is delicious and tastes nothing like chocolate.

Fortresses in the Lower City

★★**Monte Serrat**, with its red and white striped lighthouse, was built on a hill in 1586. It is near Santo Alberto, on an inlet north of the city and has an irregular shape. In 1624, the Dutch West Indian Company seized the fort and held it until 1637. In 1883, it was converted to a political prison. Today there is a display of Colonial weaponry here and from the battlements you can watch the sunset over the bay. The fort is near the Nossa Senhora do Bonfim basilica, so you can see both in the same trip. Open 9 am-12 am and 1:30-5 pm, closed Monday. Rua Santa Rita Durão, at Humaitá Point, on the Itapagipana Peninsula (☎ 71-3313-7339).

São Marcelo Fortress (Forte de São Marcelo), is a circular fortress in the Todos dos Santos Bay that can be can be seen from the Mercado Modelo. French architects built it from 1602 to 1623, but they had to fix an error that made it impossible for the cannon to reach their targets. At

São Marcelo Fortress
(E. Gaba)

the time of publication the fort was going to be opened for visits, accessible via boat from the Maritime Tourist Center in the Lower City. The plan (let's see if it pans out) was to have actors dressed in period costume from 1777, and to reactivate the cannon for daily firing, just like the old city's "clock" blasting the hour at 4 am and 9 pm. Check with Emtursa for details or ask at the Maritime Tourist Center to see if it's open yet (☎ 71-3380-4200).

Churches in the Lower City

★★★The **Church of Nosso Senhor Bom Jesus do Bonfim** dates from the 16th century and is by far the most famous church in Bahia, perhaps the most famous in Brazil. In January there is a festival on the second Tuesday (see *Festivals & Events*, above). There is a special "room of miracles" on the ground floor where thousands of photos, plaster replicas of healed hands, feet and heads have been left in gratitude for graces. Outside, all sorts of men, women, children and elderly accost you to sell the famous "*fitinhas*" or "*medidas*," the colorful ribbons seen everywhere in Brazil and worn around the wrist. They are believed to have the power to grant wishes and give good luck. Visits are from 8 am to 6 pm. Praça Senhor do Bonfim, no number, in Bonfim (☎ 71-3316-2196).

The **Church of Nossa Senhora da Conceição da Praia** was built of marble blocks carved in Portugal and assembled here. Near the Lacerda Elevator and the Modelo Market on Praça Cairu, it is definitely worth a look. If you have time you can visit the sacristies, with an image of Nossa Senhora da Conceição from 1856. Visits from 9-11 am and 3-5 pm. At Conceição da Praia, no number.

Upper City: Pelourinho & Historical District

The ★★★**Pelourinho** and nearby **Historical District of Sé** in the Upper City is a neighborhood with narrow cobbled streets, staircases, plazas and colorful buildings.

Pelourinha area

The name *pelourinho*, or sometimes just pelô, comes from the days of the Inquisition and public stocks here. All through the district are houses, museums, shops, restaurants and bars with hundreds of perfectly restored buildings dating from the 16th through the 19th centuries, once homes of the Bahian aristocracy.

The thing to do is just wander around. Here you can enjoy free open-air entertainment with occasional impromptu shows by famous Afro-Brazilian groups. The district is a great place to eat, with typical restaurants such as the **Tempero da Dadá** and the **SENAC Restaurant** (see *Where to Eat*). If you like, you can visit the churches and museums here.

There a lots of shops as well, but what you buy on impulse could cost much less elsewhere. Things to look for are traditional Bahian handicrafts and clothing, capoeira instruments or memorabilia, not to mention delicious chocolates from the cocoa lands to the south of Salvador or aromatic and savory Brazilian cigars, also hand-rolled in Bahia.

The **Praça da Sé** is the "entrance" to the Pelourinho, with a fountain and architectural lighting adjacent to a convenient bus terminal (Lapa). One of the most sumptuous churches in Latin America once stood here, the Sé de Bahia, built in 1553. In 1933 the church was demolished to make room for streetcars. A restoration project has improved the plaza and turned it once again into a scenic landmark, with a monument called the "Fallen Cross" by Mario Cravo that commemorates the demolition of the church.

Also in the Sé neighborhood there is **Fountain of Jesus**, in Terreiro de Jesus square, with four figures representing the great rivers of Bahia. Nearby are historic churches from the Colonial period. The fountain was once the main supply of fresh water in the city. A short walk from Sé, you can take the Lacerda Elevator to the Lower City and the Mercado Modelo.

The **Statue of Castro Alves**, in the Castro Alves Plaza, is an allegory in bronze and granite against slavery, dedicated to a great Abolitionist poet Castro Alves, by the Italian artist Pasquali di Chirico. The statue stands on the spot that is the heart of Carnival in Salvador.

The **Rio Branco Palace** (Palacio Rio Branco) is at the Praça Municipal (Tomé da Souza plaza) and dates from 1549. It was built by the aristocrat Tomé da Souza to house the Colonial government and has a great view of the Bay and the Lower City. Inside, there is period furniture and décor from the turn of the 20th century. It was reworked in 1919 in Neoclassical style. The palace closes on the weekends but opens daily from 10-12 am and 2-6 pm.

Rio Blanco Palace

Museums in the Upper City

The **Abelardo Rodrigues Museum** has 800 works of sacred, fine and popular arts, with collections from the 16th to the 19th centuries and rotating contemporary art expositions. At Rua Gregório de Mattos, 45, Solar do Ferrão, in the Pelourinho, it opens Tuesday through Friday 9 am-6 pm, Saturday 1-6 pm, and Sunday 9 am-2 pm (☎ 71-3320-9383).

There is a collection of indigenous artifacts, paintings and photos in the **Archeology and Ethnology Museum**, at Terreiro de Jesus, in the Pelourinho. Open Monday through Friday, from 9 am-5 pm (☎ 71-3321-0983).

A Colonial building has been converted into the ★**Benin House** (Casa de Benin), with exhibits on African art, at the Largo de Pelourinho. Open Monday through Friday 9 am-5 pm (☎ 71-3243-2994).

The **City Museum** (Museu da Cidade) on Avenida Gregório de Mattos, 40, displays candomblé images, *carranca* wood carvings to ward off evil spirits, and other works. Open 9 am-5 pm and Saturday 8-12 am (☎ 71-3321-1967).

Salvador's **Erotic Musuem** (Museu Erótico) was a first of its kind in Brazil, with exhibits of erotic sculpture and pottery from the Brazilian northeast, Asia, the Andes and Europe. The museum opens Monday through Friday 9-12 am and 2-6 pm (☎ 71-3322-2552).

The **Jorge Amado House Foundation** is dedicated to the famous Brazilian writer, with exhibits on his life, and occasional events, at Largo do Pelourinho. Open Monday through Saturday 9 am-6 pm (☎ 71-3321-0070).

The **Sacred Art Museum** (Museu de Arte Sacra) has one of the most signficant collections of religious arts in Latin America, including images in wood, paintings, panels, and tiles. At Rua do Sodré, 276, in the Downtown neighborhood, it opens from 12:30 am-6 pm on weekdays only.

The **Rui Barbosa House** (Casa de Rui Barbosa) is dedicated to the Brazilian historical figure and man of letters. Rua dos Capitães, 12, in the Ajuda neighborhood. Open Monday through Friday 2-5 pm (☎ 71-3321-4477).

Churches in the Upper City

The 17th-century Baroque **Basilica Cathedral** has musical concerts on Sundays in June. The building is one of the most striking in Bahia, with sumptuous marble inside and out. Open 9 to 11:30 am and 3 to 5 pm, at the Terreiro de Jesus (☎ 71-3321-4573).

The **Church of Nossa Senhora do Rosário dos Pretos**, known as the Pelourinho Church, is in a plaza near the Baixa do Sapateiro (avoid this area at night). The legend is that the church got its name from the slaves, who founded a religious congregation of their own because the Third Order of São Francisco rejected black priests. At Praça José de Alencar, no number, in the Pelourinho. Visits are from 8-12 am and 2-6 pm (☎ 71-3326-9701).

Pelourinho Church

Most of the objects in the **Igreja da Ajuda** came from the old Sé de Palha (at the Praça Sé in the upper city), which was demolished early in the last century. The relics include an image of Our Lady that is thought to have arrived in the New World in the ship that brought the founder of the city Tomé de Sousa to Bahia in 1549. Open 7-11 am and 3-6 pm, at Rua da Ajuda.

The **Church of the Third Order of São Francisco** was built in 1702, with a beautiful façade. The ceiling was painted in 1831, and in the convent there are tile panels showing the marriage of the Emperor Dom José in 1729. On Rua Inácio Accioli, in the Pelourinho, it opens Monday through Friday 9 am-5 pm and Saturday 8-12 am (☎ 71-3321-6968).

CAPOEIRA: THE RITUAL FIGHTING DANCE

African slaves in Brazil kept their culture alive by disguising what they were doing. To practice self-defense, they hid traditional combat moves within a kind of ritual dance called *capoeira* that involves sweeping circular motions to maintain balance and provide powerful momentum. In 1932, Manuel dos Reis Machado, better known as Bimba, founded the country's first capoeira academy in Salvador, and the movement caught on all around Brazil. Today this artful dance is popular in faraway places like New York. You can watch in front of the Mercado Modelo on Praça Cairu practically every day and especially Saturday mornings, or in the neighborhoods of Liberdade, Cosme de Farias, Federação, São Caetano, Itapuã and Permambués on Sundays and holidays in the afternoon.

Capoeira consists of a ring of participants dressed in white – open to both men and women – who enter and circle each other to gauge their opponent, swaying left and right, before slowly building up what can be an aggressive flurry of feints, kicks and summersaults, all to the strong percussion and the eerie twang of the *berimbau*. This is a bow-shaped stick connected to a painted gourd with a single heavy metal string that is plucked to vibrate between a stone and a piece of wood held in the other hand. While aggressive, mutual respect is also one of the trademarks of capoeira.

The orthodox "*rodas de capoeira*" academies include the **Master Bimba School**, which offers lessons to beginners. At Rua das Laranjeiras, 51, in the Pelourinho, it opens Monday through Friday 9 am-9:30 pm, and Saturday 5-9 pm (☎ 71-322-5082). Another famous school is the **Angola Capoeira Association** led by Master Curió. The Angolan style is more of a combat style than a dance, with slower movements and low, whirling kicks. At Rua Gregório de Mattos, 36, in the Pelourinho, it opens at irregular hours on Thursday and Saturday (☎ 71-321-3087). The **Master Pastinha School** also adheres to the Angolan style. At Rua J Castro Rabelo, 7, in the Pelourinho, it opens Monday, Wednesday and Friday 7-9 pm, and weekends 3-5 pm.

Barra & Ondina

Barra and Ondina, along the coast, are where many of the better hotels are located. Here you will find some of the nicer beaches of Salvador, places to shop, and night life. Your main point of reference is the **Barra Lighthouse**, at the Santo Antonio Fortress. There is a terrace café here where you can have a drink or a snack overlooking the Todos os Santos Bay, called the **Café do Farol** ($$) on Praca Almirante Tamandare. You can also browse for typical hand-made knick-knacks at the **Instituto Maua**, on Largo da Barra, 2 (at the Barra Port).

Historic Fortresses in Barra

Picturesque Santo Antônio da Barra, on the Barra Beach, was built between 1591 and 1602 entirely of rock and cement in a hexagonal shape. The **Nautical Museum** (Museu Hidrográfico e Náutico de Bahia) has sea charts, navigation tools, mock-ups of ships and a nautical book room, as well as artifacts recovered from the doomed *Sacramento*, that wrecked in full view of the lighthouse. At the Farol da Barra, in the neighborhood of the same name, it opens Tuesday through Sunday, 11 am-5 pm (☎ 71-3264-3296).

São Diogo fort is at Barra Port opposite the Santa Maria fortress and dates from 1626, but various modifications were made over the years. Today it is run by the military. On Rua Forte São Diogo (Porto de Barra). Open 9:30-12 am and 1:30-5 pm, closed Monday (☎ 71-3264-3195).

Campo Grande & Vitoria

Campo Grande and Vitoria are upscale neighborhoods where there are nice hotels, skyscrapers, mansions dating from the days of the Cocoa Empire, a museum or two, bars, restaurants, and not much else. The park called **Campo Grande** on Avenida 7 de Setembro is the main point of reference, and the largest square in the city. Here you will find the famous **Monument to the July 2 Movement** with its 80-foot-high bronze column showing a native Brazilian battling with a serpent that represents the evil Portuguese empire.

On the other side of the Rua Forte de Sao Pedro from the park, you can see the **Teatro Castro Alves** theater, on Praca 2 de Julho, one of the most modern venues in the northeast. On the other side of the park, on 7 de Setembro 1809, is the **Brazilian-German Cultural Institute** with a bar and occasional cultural events and expositions. Open Monday through Friday.

Fortress & Museums in Campo Grande and Vitoria

São Pedro Fortress, on Rua Forte de São Pedro, was built in 1627 in the upper city on the old trenches that guarded the entrance to Vila Velha. It was rebuilt in 1827 and 1905 and today is still an Army depot that can only be seen from the outside.

The **Bahian Art Museum** (Museu de Arte da Bahia) dates from 1918, with paintings by Brazilian and international artists, rare Bahian furniture, porcelain and other objects. At Solar Cerqueira Lima, on Avenida 7 de Setembro, 2340, in the Vitória neighborhood. Open Tuesday through Friday 2-7 pm and weekends 2:30-6:30 pm (☎ 71-3329-0660).

The **Carlos Costa Pinto Museum** has 18th- and 19th-century art collections, silver, crystal, porcelain and paintings, as well as a display of bangles, the jewelry worn by slaves during colonization. There are events here to promote the works of Brazilian and Bahian artists. At Avenida 7 de Setembro, 2490, in the Vitória neighborhood, it opens every day but Tuesday, from 2:30-7 pm (www.museucostapinto.com.br; ☎ 71-3336-6081).

Cultural Adventures

Candomblé is the name of a mixture of African religions kept alive through the Colonial period and today one of Brazil's main formal religions, sometimes (incorrectly) called voodoo. The faith is distinct from African and Afro-Caribbean religions in that it also includes some indigenous Brazilian beliefs. The religion acquired Catholic symbolism, called syncretism, since by disguising the orixas or spirits as saints the African newcomers were able to maintain their religion against Portuguese repression. Ceremonies are held at some 2,000 *terreiros*, or sacred grounds in the city, most of which are closed to the public. Some, but not all, accept visits by non-practitioners. At **Emtursa** (the Tourism Secretariat) you can get information and schedule visits.

Note: Candomblé ceremonies are acts of worship and shorts, swimwear, and photography of any kind are prohibited.

The **Memorial de Mãe Menininha do Gantois** is the most famous *terreiro*. At Alto do Gantois, 23-A in Federação, it opens Tuesday through Friday 8-12 am and 2-5 pm, Saturdays 2-5 pm (☎ 71-3336-9594).

The **Ilê Ohum Lailai–Axé Opô Afonjá Museum** follows the Yoruban traditions of the ministers of Xangô. There is an exposition of saints, a replica of a kitchen used to prepare offerings to the orixás, or spirits, information on the history of the religion and displays of materials used in the rituals here. There is also a library. At Rua Direita de São Gonçalo do Retiro, 557, in Cabula, it opens 9-12 am on Wednesdays (☎ 71-3384-6800).

Adventures on Water

★★Beaches

There are 30 miles/50 km of beaches in Salvador. The most popular are Barra, Ondina, Jaguaribe, Flamengo and Ipitanga in Lauro de Frietas (Greater Salvador). Virtually every beach in the city has stands with seating, selling food and drinks. Here are some recommendations.

Boa Viagem, next to the Monte Serrat Fortress, has a great view of the upper and lower cities with volleyball and beach soccer during the week. **Porto da Barra** has calm surf popular for swimming, sailing, water skiing, kayaking, snorkeling and fishing, between São Diogo and

Santa Maria fortresses, where the founder of the city, Tomé de Souza, landed in 1549. This beach is one of the five "must see" spots in Salvador and has a mix of people you have to see to believe – but be careful. At night there is special lighting, making this a worthwhile beach for an evening dip or just to watch the spectacular sunset.

Farol da Barra is sheltered by reefs and has natural pools for snorkeling.

Ondina has snorkeling and surfing.

Rio Vermelho is deep, with heavy surf during parts of the year. It is here that the Yemanjá maritime procession starts its route every February 2.

Jaguaribe, also called the SESC beach, has a younger crowd, especially surfers.

Famous **Itapuã** is picturesque and poetic, with canoes and the local sloops used everywhere in the Northeast called jangadas. The **Farol de Itapuã** beach has stronger surf.

Upscale **Stella Maris** has surfing, with stalls selling traditional food and drinks that get packed on the weekends.

Aleluia and **Flamengo**, on the farthest point in Salvador have strong waves, popular for swimming and fishing.

★Island Excursions

Boats go to **Frade Island** daily, leaving from the Maritime Tourist Terminal (☎ 71-3326-6603) behind the Mercado Modelo at 9 am. They go first to Frade for swimming then on to the **Ilha de Itaparica** for lunch and a historical tour, returning at 6 pm. Rain can cause unannounced cancellations.

Ilha de Itaparica is a 149-mile/249-km island linked to the continent on the western side by a bridge. This used to be inhabited by cannibals, and is famous for its writer João Ubaldo Ribeiro. There are close to 24 miles/40 km of beaches. At the main beach, **Mar Grande**, there is a little French restaurant called **Philippe** ($-$$) serving delicious soft crab moqueca at a bargain price (☎ 71-3883-1060). The **Praia do Forte** near the Historical Center, was once occupied by pirates and the Dutch invaders. The legend is that the fountain here has "medicinal" waters. This beach is dominated by the impressive **São Lorenço Fortress** from 1711. The Penha beach is more sophisticated, and a surf beach, with great views of Salvador. **Cacha-Pregos** is a very popular beach on Itaparica with soft white sand. The name is slang for "long distance." There are several ways to get to Itaparica. The ferry (☎ 71-3319-2890 – it accepts cars or pedestrians) takes 45 minutes. The ferry leaves from the São Joaquim Sea Terminal (Terminal Marítimo de São Joaquim) and arrives at Terminal Bom Despacho. A 20-minute catamaran ride leaves every half-hour from 6:30 am-6:30 pm. By car you can take Highway BR 324, then exit toward Nazaré on Highway 001 and go over the Ponte do Funil Bridge.

Whale Watching

The **Jubarte Whale Institute** (Instituto Baleia Jubarte) is at Avenida do Farol – it opens from 9 am to 6 pm (☎ 71-3676-1463). **Centrotour** has a sightseeing package with whale watching and an ecological Jeep tour that costs about $45 per person (www.centroturistico.com.br; ☎ 71-3676-1091).

★Scuba Diving

Salvador is considered one of the better diving destinations in South America. The tropical waters are warm, with temperatures ranging from 22-28°C (72-82°F), with a year-round average of 26°C (78.8°F). Visibility can be pretty good for coastal dives, with up to 70 feet visibility from November through March, but the average is only around 35 feet year-round.

The lighthouses along the coast are a warning about the reefs – proof of the danger of the waters is a sea bed strewn with more than 400 shipwrecks, from dismantled Colonial galleons with bronze cannon to modern steel ships that are perfectly preserved. Note that you are not permitted to bring up anything from the wrecks.

There is rich sea life and vegetation here and, best of all, virtually every dive site is within a half-hour from land. There are dives here for all skill levels.

Salvador has three barometric centers and a number of internationally certified dive operators. A two-tank dive costs around $40, with equipment rentals for about $5 per item. There are some very good dive operators.

The **Sea View Padi Dive Center** is at Rua Professor Lemos Brito, 28 (second floor) in Barra (☎ 71-3264-3111). **Aquatech** is at Avenida

Otávio Mangabeira, 815, shop 15, at Shopping Pituba Sol in Pituba (☎ 71-3345-1933). **Bahia Scuba** (www.bahiascuba.com.br) is on Avenida Contorno, 1010, shop 12 at the Bahia Marina in Comércio (☎ 71-3321-0156 or 71-3322-0044). **Dive Bahia** is at Avenida 7 de Setembro, 3809, at the Barra Port (☎ 71-3264-3820). **Salvador Dive** is at Avenida Garibaldi, 92, in Garibaldi (☎ 71-3245-6872). **Underwater** is at Avenida Conceição da Praia, 26, in Comércio (☎ 71-3452-0274).

Side-Trip

Beaches of the Coconut Coast

The region to the north of Salvador is called the **Coconut Coast**, with its vast coastline of scenic beaches. The region extends about 116 miles/193 km, and the farther you go from Salvador, the more rustic and undeveloped the region becomes, with beaches from horizon to horizon.

Praia do Forte

As a side-trip you can take the highway to the historic ruins called **Praia do Forte**. This is Brazil's only medieval castle, about 45 miles/75 km from the city (30 miles/50 km from the International Airport). By car, take the Estrada do Coco BA-099 from downtown Salvador. About 20 miles/33 km from the city is the Lauro de Freitas district. At the end of the 45-mile/75-km Coconut Coast Highway there is a roundabout at Praia do Forte, where you can either access the beach or the ruins. One of Brazil's most famous colonial figures, a powerful nobleman, Garcia D'Ávila built this tower as a symbol of his importance in the New World. The ruins are at a site called Açu da Torre, about a mile/two km from the Praia do Forte (See *Beaches* below) and the entrance to the Sapiranga Forest Preserve (see *Jeep Tours*, below).

The tower is surrounded by a grassy area and coconut trees. There is an entrance fee of about a dollar. At night there is a romantic candlelight buffet dinner. This point is the beginning of the Linha Verde Highway that continues all the way up the coast until you leave Bahia. By bus, you have several options for leaving Salvador – from the Terminal de França, Estação de Lapa, Itapuã, Iguatemi, and Itagara.

Coconut palm

The isolated district called **Lauro de Freitas**, with its coconut palms, has reefs for swimming and fishing. Preservation activities here restored the sea turtle population and you will probably see turtles even on the beach. Kiosks serve typical snacks. Three beaches here, **Ipitanga**, **Vilas do Atlântico**, and **Buraquinho**, are popular for surfing and windsurfing. **Foz do Rio Joanes** at Buraquinho is where the river pours into the ocean for swimming and fishing.

A little up the road is a beach called **Busca-Vida** (or "search for life"), which got its name from the dangerous surf. **Jauá** is a mellow beach with calm waves. **Arambepe** has reefs and warm water, and is famous for its "hippies." It is one of the Project Tamar bases for rescuing sea turtles, and tends to be crowded. **Guarajuba**, an old fishing village, is good for swimming and windsurfing, with food and drink stands, and inland there is a lake. **Itacimirim** is calm for swimming and fishing.

Praia do Forte is a preserve for sea turtles next to the medieval Tower of Garcia D'Ávila. It has been called "Brazil's Polynesia," with crowds during parts of the year and good infrastructure for visitors. Walking along the beaches you can see colorful sergeant majors in the tide pools.

ACARAJÉ: FLAVORS OF BAHIA

Acarajé is a delicious snack sold in street stalls all over the city by big Bahian women in white dresses. The word acarajé, comes from two African words. The acara is the fried bean dough, and the jé is what you put inside when you are ready to eat it. To make acarajé, soak a kilo (2.21 lbs) of *fradinho* beans in cold water for an hour. As soon as the beans begin to swell, wash them vigorously until they lose their husks. Then grind the beans until you have a smooth white paste – this is called the massa. Add half a kilo (1.1 lbs) of onions, garlic and salt to taste in a blender and slowly add the massa. When it is ready, heat palm oil in a deep fryer and drop in a whole onion to keep the oil from burning. When it is hot enough to fry, spoon out large scoops of the massa for frying, batting them gently into the oil until fully cooked. When they are golden brown, remove the acara and add the jé: malagueta chili paste, cooked shrimp (usually fried in the husk), and vatapá. Top this steaming treat with chopped tomato, onion, sliced scallions and parsley. Delicious!

Everybody has a favorite acarajé lady who, until several years ago, walked through the streets with trays on their heads, impeccably dressed in white. Long ago, the acarajé was cooked mainly in the candomblé sacred grounds by followers, but this is no longer the case. Don't be fooled by the price, since there is no connection with quality. It should cost about a dollar or a little more if you put on the shrimp. You can't go wrong if you see a lot of locals enjoying this exotic and heavy Bahian delicacy.

Here are a few suggestions. **Regina** is at the Barra Lighthouse square on Av. Euclides da Cunha, A-2, in Graça, open Monday through Friday 3-9 pm. **Cira** is on Rua Aristides Milton, in Itapuã. **Conceição** is at the Pelourinho, at Praça Quincas Berro d´Água, open every day. Also in the Pelourinho is **Rô** at Rua Frei Vicente 4, open every day.

Where to Go Out

Day or night, the Pelourinho has shows and artistic performances worth checking out in the open air plazas of Tereza Batista, Pedro Arcanjo and Quincas Berro D'Água. There are also folkloric presentations Thursday through Saturday at 8 pm in the **SENAC Theatre** (Teatro SENAC) on Largo do Pelourinho, 17 (☎ 71-3322-8273). The **Sunset Project** (Projeto Por-de-Sol) has Brazilian popular music shows during the summer, at the Bahia Othon Palace Hotel at Avenida Oceânica, 2456, in Ondina (☎ 71-3203-2000). The **Solaris Project** (Projeto Solaris) has open-air shows at the Solar do Unhão during the summer at Avenida Contorno, in Solar do Unhão (☎ 71-3329-0660).

Where to Eat

Califa ($$) has a Middle-Eastern buffet or à la carte meals at Avenida Centenário, 2992, first floor at Shopping Barra, in Barra. Open Monday through Saturday, 10 am-10 pm and Sunday, 12 am-9 pm. Credit cards accepted (☎ 71-3267-8249 or 71-3267-1267).

★**Yemanjá** ($$) is a traditional restaurant that serves 12 kinds of *moqueca* (fish stew). At Avenida Otávio Mangabeira, no number, in Jardim Armação, it opens every day for lunch and dinner. Credit cards accepted (☎ 71-3461-9010).

Baby Beef ($$$) has specialty meats in all-you-can-eat rodízio style, a black bean buffet and international cuisine at Avenida Antonio Carlos Magalhães, 3663, in the Pituba neighborhood. Open Friday and Saturday 11:30 am-1 pm and Sunday-Thursday 11:30 am to 12 pm (☎ 71-3270-3000).

Boi Preto Grill ($$) is another rodízio-style steakhouse, with a Japanese buffet. Open for lunch and dinner every day. Credit cards accepted (☎ 71-3362-8844 or 71-3371-1429).

Marcel ($$$) has a varied French menu and opens Monday through Saturday for dinner. Credit cards accepted. It is at Morro do Escravo Miguel, 320 (Hotel Vila Galé Bahia) in the Ondina neighborhood (☎ 71-3263-8873).

The **Galpão** ($$$) serves international cuisine with a lunch buffet and a dinner menu. At Avenida Contorno, 660, in the Comércio neighborhood. Open Monday through Saturday. Credit cards accepted.

Trapiche Adelaide ($$$) serves French cuisine, with a view of the Todos de Santos Bay and piano music on Friday and Saturday. At Praça Tupinambá, 2, on the Avenida Contorno, in the Comércio neighborhood. Opens Monday through Saturday for lunch and dinner and on Sunday for lunch. Credit cards accepted (☎ 71-3326-2211).

Trapiche Adelaide

La Lupa ($$) is one of the best Italian places in the city, with very reasonable prices. The restaurant is in a rustic two-story house on Rua das Laranjeiras, 17, in the Pelourinho. Credit cards accepted. Open for lunch and dinner every day.

SOHO ($$$) is a Japanese place with glass flooring, so you can see the ocean beneath your feet. Open for lunch and dinner every day but Monday. Credit cards accepted. Avenida Lafayete Coutinho, 1010, Pier D, at the Marina in Comércio (☎ 71-3322-4554 or 71-3322-5616).

★**Gibão de Couro** ($$) is a northeastern Brazilian-style restaurant with wooden tables, leather chairs, brick walls and wooden carvings. The bar has over 100 kinds of cachaça. Open for lunch and dinner every day but Monday. Credit cards accepted. It is on Rua Mato Grosso, 53, in Pituba neighborhood.

Companhia da Pizza ($) has 100 options for pizzas cooked with a paper-thin crust to the Brazilian taste, but they can make it medium or thick if you ask. At Praça Brigadeiro Faria Rocha, no number, in Rio Vermelho, it opens every day for lunch and dinner. Credit cards accepted (☎ 71-3362-9696).

Mistura Fina ($$$) is a seafood place with mixed styles and appetizers sold by the kilo. Opens Monday through Saturday for lunch and dinner. Credit cards accepted. Rua Professor Souza Brito, 41, in Itapuã (☎ 71-3375-2623).

Saúde na Panela ($) has a vegetarian buffet at Rua das Hortênsias, 752, in Pituba. Open weekdays for lunch and dinner, and Saturday for lunch.

Sorveteria da Ribeira ($) is a famous ice cream shop on Rua General Osorio, 87 (Largo de Ribeira).

Where to Shop

Chocolate Caseiro de Ilhéus is a chocolate factory, dating from the period when Brazil was the world's largest producer of cocoa. They even make erotic varieties. You can visit the factory in Ilhéus (see *Cocoa Coast*), or stop by **Shopping Iguatemi**, at Av. Tancredo Neves, 148, third floor in Pituba. There is also an outlet at the Salvador International Airport (☎ 71-3204-1210).

For arts and crafts, try **São Joaquim fair** on Av. Oscar Pontes in the Lower City. The most obvious place to shop is the **Mercado Modelo** (see *Lower City*). There is an arts and crafts fair in the **Pelourinho** at Rua Gregório de Mattos, 3, priced for international tourists. The **Instituto Visconde de Mauá** is a good option either at the Pelourinho on Rua Gregório de Mattos, 27 or at Praça Azevedo Fernandes, 2, at the Barra Port.

You can find artesenal liquors and *cachaças* around town or at **Feitiço Baiano** on Rua Inácio Accioly, 09, in the Pelourinho.

Another famous place to shop is the **Casa da Mulher Rendeira**, on Rua Gregório de Mattos, 31, in the Pelourinho. Open from Monday through Friday 10 am-7 pm. Here you can find delicate, handwoven goods that aren't cheap.

Didara is a cool shop with Afro-Brazilian beach *cangas* (wraps), hats, dresses, robes, shorts, tee-shirts, pants, bags and sandals, at Rua Gregório de Matos, 20, Loja 4, in the Pelourinho. Open daily from 9 am-7 pm (☎ 71-3321-9428).

Where to Stay

During Carnival and other major holidays, it can be hard to get a room and prices soar to three times the normal price. Out of season, Salvador has very affordable lodging, but quality drops off at the lower-end places.

Blue Tree Towers Salvador ($$$), high up on the Morro do Conselho Hill, has ocean or garden views with pool, tennis, sauna, and fitness center. Rua Monte Conselho, 505, in Rio Vermelho (☎ 71-3330-2233).

Catussaba Hotel ($$) is close to the airport and units have a veranda with a hammock. There are four interconnected pools, six tennis courts, sauna, gym, and a childrens' park. Alamendas da Praia, no number, in Itapuã (☎ 71-3374-8000).

Bahia Othon Palace

The Bahia Othon Palace ($$$) has air-conditioning, Internet access, beauty salon, travel agency, restaurants, pool, gym, massage, dance hall and game room at Avenida Presidente Vargas, 2456, in Ondina (☎ 71-3203-2000).

Fiesta Bahia Hotel ($$) has 244 rooms and suites, with basic amenities. Avenida Antonio Carlos Magalhães, 711, in Itaigara (☎ 71-352-0000).

Marazul Hotel ($$), is between the Port and the Barra Lighthouse (Farol da Barra), one of the most popular destinations in Salvador. Some rooms have an ocean view. Avenida Sete de Setembro, 3937, in Porto da Barra (☎ 71-3264-8299).

Praiamar Hotel ($$) at the Barra Port has a pool, restaurant, beauty parlor and currency exchange. Avenida Sete de Setembro, 3577, in Porto da Barra (☎ 71-3264-7011).

Pestana Bahia Hotel ($$$) has rooms and suites with an ocean view. There are game rooms, gym, dry and steam saunas, a bar and restaurant. Rua Fonte do Boi, 216, at Rio Vermelho (☎ 71-3453-800).

Salvador Praia Hotel ($$) has room with an ocean view. Amenities include pool and restaurant with Bahian and International cuisine. Avenida President Vargas, 2338, in Ondina (☎ 71-3203-9000).

Pestana Bahia Hotel

Sofitel

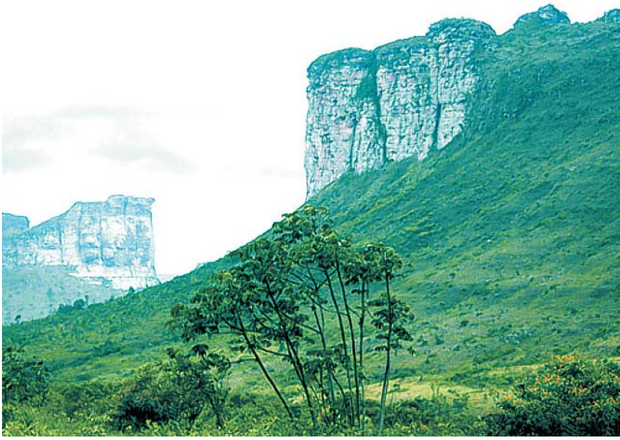
Sol Vitória Marina ($$$) is a Sol Melia hotel with its own pier and a tram to transport guests, a floating deck, bar, restaurant, water slide and pool. Some rooms have an ocean view and are adapted for special needs. Avenida Sete de Setembro, 2068, in Vitória (☎ 71-3336-7736).

Sofitel Salvador ($$-$$$), close to the international airport and the beach, has complete infrastructure for leisure and services, including currency exchange, library, medical care, baby-sitter, dry and steam sauna, massage room and fitness center. Rua da Pasárgada, no number, in Itapuã (☎ 71-3374-8500).

Tropical Hotel de Bahia ($$$) is a very fine hotel close to the Historic District and the Pelourinho, with a pool, facilities for the disabled, a fitness center, and 24-hour room service. Avenida Sete de Setembro, 1537, in Campo Grande (www.tropicalhotel.com.br).

Chapada Diamantina

- Explore the spectacular canyonlands
- Roam stony ghost towns from the Gold Rush
- Enjoy trails, caverns and flooded grottos



Chapada Diamantina is a spectacular no-man's land in the heart of Bahia. Topographically, the region has high plateaus and low river valleys carved through the rock. This is the result of tectonic upheavals that lifted the immense layers of limestone, quartzite and sandstone, exposing them to wind and water erosion and forming canyons. Variations can range nearly half a mile from the highest and lowest altitudes in the park.

During the rainy season you can see colorful orchids sprouting from cracks in the rock, and the forests turn lush with new growth (the downside is that some of the trails are then washed out). When it turns dry, the Caatinga*s* or deserts retract and turn brown. The cactus, palm, and bromeliads adapt to the conditions of high desert by conserving their energy, with thick vegetation only in isolated pockets of tropical rainforest near the waterways filled with the birdsong from finches and parakeets.

There are some extraordinary wildlife spotting opportunities away from the main towns, and trekking adventures that can bring you to exhilarating sights. Definitely bring a camera. You are likely to see capybaras and probably anteaters and monkeys, as well as reclusive tapirs or even the very rare South American jaguar in its natural habitat.

You don't have to travel far from the historic cities to find natural caverns in the limestone and quartzite formations under the sandstone, with galleries of native rock where shafts of natural sunlight cast blue reflections on the walls. In some of these natural pools, you can actually swim and there are many waterfalls and "natural whirlpools" where the business of the day is nothing more than to relax in the beauty of your surroundings.

History of the Region

It is under debate for how long the region has been inhabited, but cave paintings suggest that it was inhabited by nomadic groups hundreds or thousands of years before Europeans arrived. These fierce indigenous groups violently resisted all newcomers.

In the 18th century, European explorers Von Martius and Von Spix spread the rumors of gold and diamonds, sparking an influx of 20,000 prospectors bent on wealth. These frenzied Gold Rush days gave birth to towns like Lençois and Xique-Xique for housing troops of colonists and explorers called *Bandeirantes*. Virtually everything was built by slave labor, from the roads to the frontier towns built of stone. When the Gold Rush ended, it left these cities in ruins and other remnants of the Colonial past.

Chapdada Diamantina was declared a national park in 1985, which has helped to save the region from being strip-mined into oblivion, but the park has not done very much otherwise. The territory inside the park is occupied by technically illegal squatters and there is little if any of the involvement by federal authorities that you might expect for a park of this importance.

Over time it has become of one the top ecological tourism destinations in South America with well-preserved sites and many options for travelers. Some of the amazing wildlife, such as the orchids, are in danger of disappearing due to bio-piracy and the illicit trade in flora and fauna (even for sale to unwitting tourists). Taking flora or fauna out of the country, even innocently, can get you in serious trouble with the Federal Police at the airport.

Gentlemen, Bandits & Bandoliers: Prospecting in Diamantina

Before the discovery of precious metals in 1710 on the banks of the Contas Pequeno river in the southern part of Chapada Diamantina, the only people here were scattered Maracás indigenous groups. They attacked anyone who encroached. To defend themselves, a few ranchers and farmers set up huge plantations. When diamonds were discovered near the banks of the Mucugê River in 1844, the gold had already run out and the region was in decline. Word spread fast through the desperate mining towns, but the diamond cycle also soon died out with the discovery of more lucrative finds in South Africa. When slavery was abolished in 1888, mining ceased to be viable and the population shrank.

Farming and ranching became more lucrative in the hands of a few powerful landowners, with the vast majority of locals living in the worst form of poverty. This was an important moment in Brazil's history when these wealthy patriarchs, called "*coronéis*," or Colonels, because they claimed military titles, ruled over their lands with armies of civilian gunmen. These "gentlemanly" Colonels were ruthless but did maintain a kind of law and order in the colonial frontiers against incursions from dreaded *jagunços* and *cangaceiros*, the bandits of the badlands. The most infamous of the outlaws was Lampião, who wandered from plantation to plantation, terrifying the locals with his war bands.

The last of the "*coronéis*" was Horácio de Mattos, who built up the highways, schools, paved streets and electricity systems in Lençóis, even printing his own monetary units on colored paper. For many years, "exiled" from the capital due to his prestige in the interior, Coronel Horácio began visiting Salvador against the advice of friends, to spend time with his family. He was finally assassinated during the 1930 revolutionary unrest.

How to Get Here

By air, regional flights take an hour from Salvador to **Lençóis**, arriving in the nearby town called Tanquinho. Make sure you explain you are going to Chapada Diamantina and not to the **Lençóis Maranhenses**, which is a totally different destination in Maranhão state!

To get to the city from the airport, you need to take a shuttle (about $7), which you can arrange ahead of time with a travel agent. Aeroporto Coronel Horácio de Matos is at Highway BR 242, km 209, about 15 miles/25 km from Lençóis (☎ 75-3625-8100). **Nordeste Linhas Aéreas** has flights to Lençóis from Brasília, Barreira and Salvado (☎ 75-3334-1394). **Pantanal** has flights to and from São Paulo (☎ 75-3334-1183).

Overland, you can catch a comfortable air-conditioned *leito* bus from Salvador and other cities. By bus you are better off going during the day when the roads are safest. The **Real Expresso** bus line has daily buses between Salvador and Lençóis (☎ 75-3331-1044). There were departures at 7:30 am and 11:30 pm for a six-hour trip, but check for recent schedules at the Salvador Bus Station. The Lençóis Bus Station (Rodoviario) is at Avenida Senhor dos Passos (☎ 75-3334-1112).

If you drive from Salvador, take Highway BR 324 to Feira de Santana, then to BR 116 until you reach Paraguaçu. There take BR 242 to Lençóis along a narrow and winding highway. Avoid driving at night – the roads are dangerous. Ask at your guesthouse or elsewhere for updates on conditions.

Lençóis is a good choice if you plan to stay in only one place. In general the roads are in bad condition between towns, except between Mucugê and Palmeiras, which is partially paved. From Palmeiras to Vale do Capão, it's rough but passable at a slow pace. Once in the vicinity of the park, transport is easier with local vans and cabs.

Festivals & Events

In Lençóis, on January 6 is the **Kings Festival**. This festival has a "bumba-meu-boi" theme, which is similar to the "boi-bumba" festivals in parts of the Amazon region and elsewhere in the Brazilian northeast. Costumes represent the myth of a humble plantation worker who kills a prize bull for his wife, after she demands its tongue as a snack. The landlord learns of this and a drama unfolds as he prepares to kill the worker, with the bull being miraculously restored to life in a happy ending.

January 24 through February 2 is the **Senhor dos Passos** religious festival, with folk music, prayers, fireworks, mass, and street dancing. In March, between Ash Wednesday and Easter, locals celebrate the "**delivery of the souls**." Residents file through the streets to the cemetery wailing dirges. In June, **Saint John's Festival** parties quicken the streets with streamers, special lighting and noise until dawn. In Mucegê, where "São João" is patron, a local marching band organizes a fireworks session and strolls through town at 4:30 am to summon a communal breakfast at the church. At night the party goes till late and if you stay here, ask at your guesthouse if there are parties nearby or you may not get any sleep. In August and September, there is the **Lençóis Winter Festival** with shows and workshops, the **Igatu Cultural Festival** and in September the commemoration of **Corpus Christi** in Rio de Contas.

Getting Around

You can visit Chapada Diamantina virtually year round. The average yearly temperature is 23°C (73°F). There are basically two seasons: rains in the summer months of November to March fill up the waterfalls and replenish the vegetation. Flash floods are common during this season. From February onward the rivers are still pretty full without so much rain. The trails then start to dry out and the flow at the falls and streams drops off. From April to August, the orchids, bromeliads and wildflowers bloom.

Bromeliad

The climate is mild and even in the summer the nights are cool because of the altitude, while in the winter the temperature drops quite a bit. Even though the park is a protected region, in practice there is practically nothing to indicate that it is a park – the trails are not marked, there are few if any forest rangers and people live inside the park's limit with little interference from authorities. The National Park itself encompasses about 587 square miles (or 152,000 hectares) set aside for sustainable use. But there is a lot to do outside of the park as well.

You might spend a week to see the best spots, or at least three or four days (with overland travel from Salvador, count on five or six days). One of the advantages of the region is that the towns are close enough to get from one to another easily. Where to stay depends on the trail, cavern or other adventure you select, but an added dimension of your trip is enjoying the different towns along the way, and you should make it clear to your guide that you plan to move on. Getting to and from the towns is easier with the help of local guides, but you can get around by car or van (the main public transport here). If you drive yourself, it is a good idea to schedule your transport during the day and find out about road conditions in advance. Each town has its own appeal, and you may prefer to "adopt" one for more than a day.

Practically all of the towns here were built from stone, giving Chapada Diamantina a very distinct and charming atmosphere. If you like, you can get maps at the Tourism Secretariats, at shops, or even at the guesthouse of your town.

Lençóis

Lençóis is the largest town, with its own airport and is the best choice if you plan to stay in one town. Prospectors used to live in cloth tents, hence the name "lençóis," which means "sheets." There are rows of stone houses with brown tile roofs, and colorful historic mansions. Nearby are the **Lapão Grotto**, **Peaceful Falls**, and the **Marimbus wetlands**. You can also reach **Lapa Doce Grotto**, **Little Silver Grotto** and the **Blue Grotto** from here or from Palmeiras. The Bus Station is at Avenida Senhor dos Passos (☎ 75-331-1044). There is a **Banco do Brasil** in town. In Lençóis, the **Colonial Nossa Senhora do Rosário Church** is on Praça do Rosário. The **Manor of Rua 7 de Setembro** (Casarão da Rua 7 de Setembro), is a diplomatic post from the Gold Rush built by French diamond prospectors. The town has a colorful historical section, where most of the bars, guesthouses and restaurants are located. The surrounding rivers have a reddish hue from the iron. Some travelers say Lençóis is overpriced, but it is convenient for getting to onward destinations. Try starting out in Lençóis and explore other cities from there.

Andaraí

Caeté-Açu

Andaraí is not as pretty as the other cities and has fewer historical buildings, but it is fun to walk through the narrow streets and see the old Colonial homes and the diamond baron's mansion. The town is basically a point of departure for trails to the Marimbus wetlands, **Blue Pool** and **Enchanted Pool**. From here, make the famous trek through the Valley of Paty to the hippie town of **Caeté-Açu**. "Andaraí" means "River of the Bats" in Tupi-Guarani. Diamond prospectors founded the settlement in 1845. About nine miles/ 15 km away there is **Igatu**, a Colonial prospecting town with cobbled streets on the Paraguaçu river – the waterway with white sand banks along the main road leading to the village. Everything is built of rock. Next to the city is **Xique-Xique de Igatu**, long a ghost town. Igatu is strategically positioned for access to the valleys, hills and waterfalls of the region, and organized treks through the prospecting trails that criss-cross the Chapada. To get to Andaraí, you can take a bus from Salvador on the Real Expresso line (☎ 71-3450-9310). By car, take Highway BR-242 to BA-142 (before Lençóis), then drive 31 miles/52 km to Andaraí.

Mucugê

Byzantine Cemetery
(J. Diver)

About 18 miles/30 km from Xique-Xique do Igatu, the stark Mucugê was the first town built during the diamond rush. Mucugê has the feel of a mountain village, at an altitude of 3,280 feet/1,000 m, with a mild climate of 19°C (66°F) on average. The main attraction in the city is the historic **Byzantine Cemetery**, with its ornamented tombs in the rocks near the rivers Mucugé and Paraguaçu, built by German prospectors in the 1800s. It is said to be the only one of its kind in the Americasis and lies at the entrance to town. Nearby are the Blue Pool and the Enchanted Pool. The Bus Station is on Praça Coronel Propécio (☎ 75-3338-2162). There is a Banco do Brasil in town. Mucugê has the

Projeto Sempre Viva, a wildlife preservation project for wild flowers eradicated by mining and bio-piracy. Within the project's zone, there are two very beautiful waterfalls, **Piabinhas** and **Tiburtino**, considered some of the best in the region. They are very easily accessed.

Palmeiras

Palmeiras

(S. Santos)

Palmeiras is a tiny village with limited food and lodging, and you are better off staying in Lençóis than here. It was once a diamond town on Lajedinho creek, and mining is still important. Stroll the historic district to the mansion called **Alcântaras Palace** and the **Matriz de Bom Jesus Church**, near city hall. If you do opt to overnight here, consider the artists' and hippie village of **Caeté-Açu** (**Capão**) close by. This is a jumping-off point for Father Inácio Hill, Smoky Falls, Drum Mountain, and other trails and waterfalls. You can also reach Lapa Doce Grotto, Little Silver Grotto and the Blue Grotto from here or from Lençóis. Access to the Mucugenzinho River trail and Devil's Pool are here as well. The Bus Station is at Largo Dois de Julho at the entrance to the city, and opens from 5 am-11 pm (☎ 75-3332-2250). The **Real Expresso Bus Line** serves the town (☎ 71-3450-2991).

Tour Agencies

Using tour agencies is unavoidable in Chapada Diamantina. Because the park is poorly funded, the guides are the caretakers of the region, and they expertly provide access to all sorts of activities. These can range from hikes and trails, to lengthy treks where you might spend a week or more in the enchanting canyonlands, or off-road tours on bikes, mule trains or even esoteric spiritual visits that put you in contact with reputed healing energies.

Equipment and transport that you will need, such as canoes, bikes, or other equipment, is available from the local guide associations and outfitters, or through your pousada, which may have a special arrangement with a local guide service.

It pays to look around a bit before choosing a guide – many of the services are essentially the same, so look for quality and somebody that you like.

You should use only registered guides, even though they are more expensive. Guides cost about $10-25 per excursion, with the highest prices in Lençóis. For longer trips, a group of five will cost at least $25 per day.

Some guides have photo books for you or pictures on the Internet to help you choose a trail based on your available time, but don't let them push you into anything. The same is true for the touts who approach you on the street.

For guides in Lençóis try: **Andrenalina Turismo e Aventura**, at Rua das Pedras, 121, andrenalina@gd.com.br, ☎ 75-3334-1261; **Nelson's Mountain Bike Trips** at Rua Urbano Duarte, 10, ☎ 75-3334-1319; **Ronay Mountain Bike and Cycling Tourism**, ☎ 75-3334-1171; **Taurino Horseback Trips**, at Rua das Pedras, ☎ 75-334-1143; **Nativos da Chapada** for rappel, swimming, and radical sports, at Rua Miguel Calmon, 29, ☎ 75-3334-1214; **Marimbus Ecoturismo**, offering boat trips through the Marimbus, maribus@bol.com.br, ☎ 75-3334-1292). In Andaraí try **Ecotrekking**, said to be one of the better trekking guides in the region for longer trips; ecotrekking@snv.com.br, ☎ 75-3351-1889, 71-3451-2601 or 71-3451-2602.

Tips for Enjoying Chapada Diamantina

ADVICE
ADVICE

For most destinations a private guide is either recommended or required. Generally, you will need two or more people for a trip but, if you are alone, chances are you will find somebody to form a group. Keep in mind that local conditions change frequently during the rainy season. There are all kinds of trails, some easy, some difficult, so don't rely solely on what the guide tells you.

Some places charge a fee of a few dollars, so bring a little local currency with you. It is technically illegal to charge a fee inside the park, but unavoidable (this gouging is called a "conservation fee"). On private land, the fee is legal. Paying the fee is a small hassle compared to what you get here.

Good things to bring are a backpack or rucksack, sun block, swimsuit, sneakers or hiking shoes, comfortable shorts, pants or jeans, and a light jacket, flannel shirt or sweater for the evenings. At times and, depending on your altitude or exposure at camp, it can get surprisingly chilly. Plastic bags are useful to remove trash. A flashlight is helpful in some caverns while a mask and snorkel (or at least goggles) are useful for the pools.

Swimming is prohibited in parts of Chapada Diamantina, so decide with your guide if you are going on a sightseeing trip or a swimming trip or both. One of the best parts of the trip in the summer is taking a dip in the hundreds of locations available.

Mosquito repellent is advised. A canteen or water bottle is useful anywhere and necessary in some places. You will be more comfortable if you travel light on the trails, but bring at least non-perishable food for snacks or if you get lost. Don't stray from the trails, as there are supposedly some poisonous snakes and scorpions in the region.

For More Information

Tourist information is available in Lençóis at the bus station on Avenida Senhor dos Passos. Call the **Tourism Secretariat** (☎ 75-3334-1380, 75-3334-1327, 75-3334-1121, or 75-3334-1622). Or you can try the **Lençóis Tour Guide Association** (☎ 75-3334-1344). In Mucugê, the **Tourism Secretariat** is at Praça Douca Medrado, 1, on Highway BA-142 entering town (☎ 75-3338-2143 or 75-3338-2193). There is also a state **Bahiatursa** office at Rua Coronel Douca Medrado, 71, in the historic district (☎ 75-3338-2255). In Andaraí, the **Tourism Secretariat** is at Rua da Glória, 48 (☎ 75-3335-2056 or 75-3335-2118). Or you can try the **Andaraí Tour Guide Association**, at Rua Doutor José Gonçalves Sincorá (☎ 75-3335-2126 or 75-3335-2255). In Palmeiras, there is no tourism secretariat but look for the visitors guide association at Rua Barão do Rio Branco, 25 (☎ 75-3332-2229). The **Brazilian Wildlife Protection Agency** (**Ibama**) has an office there, but they are not very helpful (☎ 75-3332-2229).

Adventures on Land

Waterfalls

★★The **Smoky Waterfall** (Cachoeira de Fumaça) gets its name from the wispy cascades that disappear in the thin air before they touch the ground. These 1,115-foot/340-m falls are among the highest in the world. Access is either from below or from the top of the falls on foot. To look down from the top, you have to approach the precipice on your belly. To get to the top requires a 3.6-mile/six-km hike from Vila de Caetê-Açu (Capão), including a very steep .9-mile/1½ km stretch in the Serra do Sincorá, that takes about two hours. But it is worth the effort. To see it from below you need to trek three days (see *Trekking*, below). The entrance to the upper falls is marked about 40 miles/67 km from Lençóis, on the road to Capão, in Palmeiras (at Km 248 of BR 343).

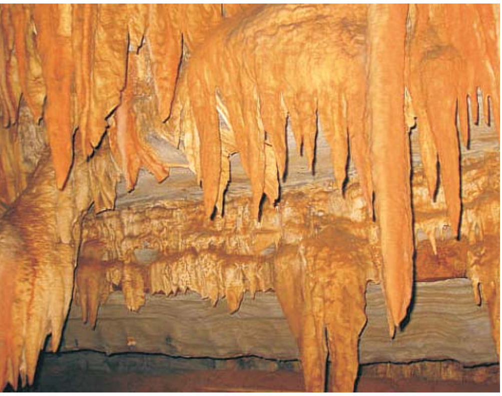
Slippery Falls (Escorregadeira) is a natural rock swimming hole only 2.1 miles/3½ km from Lençóis, about a 40-minute walk along an old prospecting trail. The rock slide is very popular. You can go upriver a little way and find natural whirlpools in the rocks.

Ramalho Falls (Cachoeira do Ramalho) has a swimming hole beneath the 230-foot/70-m falls. The hike is moderate, on an old miners' trail that takes about two hours. The falls are about 60 miles/100 km from Lençóis.

Peaceful Falls (Cachoeira de Sossego) is a difficult hike up the steep rocky slope that used to be miners' trails. The 66-foot/20-m falls and natural pool are halfway up the Riberão do Meio creek. You need a guide, and the trail closes during the rains. It takes about three hours to get there. It's 4.8 miles/eight km from Lençóis, three miles/five km from the Slippery Falls, which you normally visit on the way back.

Caverns, Caves & Grottos

★★**Enchanted Pool** is a grotto 200 feet/61 m deep that shines sapphire blue due to the minerals in the water. Stunning shafts of sunlight can be seen at certain times of the year. Inside the pool are tree trunks from eons past (no swimming). The phenomenon is best observed in the morning (10:30-noon) from April through August. It's 90 miles/150 km from Lençóis, in Itaité.



★**Torrinha Cavern** is filled with rare formations. Guided visits take from one to three hours, depending on which underground trails you take. There is some crawling around, and it is not all well illuminated. The fee is $4-10, depending on your route, including guide. At Estrada de Bandeira west of Lençóis, toward Iracé about 38 miles/63 km, in Iraquara.

Lapa Doce Cavern has an eerie limestone gallery 2,625 feet/800 m deep, with the entrance on Estrada de Bandeira, a few miles from Torrinha going west. The entrance fee is a few dollars. Approximately 10 miles of caverns have been mapped, full of rock formations in strange shapes. The cave is not as exciting as Torrinha, but it is impressive, and the trail is easier. It is in the Iraquara region, about 42 miles/70 km from Lençóis.

★**Little Silver Grotto** (Gruta de Pratinha) has a shallow lake at the mouth of the cave where swimming is permitted. The crystal clear, bluish waters reflect the silvery rock overhangs and schools of tiny fish

inhabit the pool. Bring a mask and snorkel. On Estrada de Bandeira, about 45 miles/75 km from Lençóis in Iraquara.

Blue Pool (Poço Azul) has an underground lake in the Nova Redenção municipality, smaller than the Enchanted Pool, but similar, and the entrance is along an easy trail. Entrance costs about a dollar. It's 90 miles/150 km from Lençóis.

Blue Grotto (Gruta Azul) has a pool near the Estrada de Bandeira in the direction of Irecé, about 45 miles/75 km from Lençóis, close to Little Silver Grotto. It is similar the Enchanted Pool and Blue Pool, with a shaft of light that illuminates the chamber.

Lapão Grotto is a quartzite cave with a 150-foot entrance. Get there by a vigorous hike from Lençóis. It takes about two hours to see the cave – a guide is required.

Mountain Biking

The main routes are near the towns of Lençóis and Andaraí, where it is easiest to rent bikes, hire guides and obtain information. There are options in the park itself and nature reserves in Marimbus/Iraquara and Serra do Barbado. Each of the cities has its own routes and locals know them best (guides are recommended). Most have basic facilities along the way. Following are some of the most popular routes.

Morro do Pai Inácio

Leaving from Andaraí and Mucugê, you have a choice of trails: **Andaraí-Paty-Guiné** is a 17½-mile/40-km trail with overnight in Paty, considered one of the most scenic. **Mucugê-Igatu-Andaraí** is a tough 28-mile/64-km trail requiring good physical condition and riding skills. **Mucugê-Paty** is a difficult 13.2-mile/30-km trail through the wilderness. **Andaraí-Lençóis** is another hard route, about 15.3 miles/35 km long with some serious obstacles that require skillful riding. From Lençóis, the most popular and lightest trail is about two miles/five km to **Ribeirão do Meio**. You can also climb to the **Morro do Pai Inácio** which is about eight miles/18 km. If you seek a longer route, you can make it to **Capão**, with nice views through the valley on a route that is about 12 miles/27 km.

Trails

Morrão

Tabor Mountain (Morrão) is a hike to a tall hill in the middle of an open field near Campina, a tiny community between Palmeiras and Caeté-Açu.

★★**Father Inácio Hill** (Morro do Pai Inácio) is a scenic plateau in the Sincorá highlands jutting out of the plain at an elevation of 3,675 feet/1,120 m. From up top, the view is amazing at sunset, if not clouded over with mist. This is private land, with a fee of about $3. Located on BR 242 (at Km Marker 231) toward Seabra, about 12 miles/20 km from Lençóis.

The **Mucugezinho River trail** has the Devil's Pool (Poço de Diabo), with its mysterious dark, iron-rich river and a multi-tiered cascade of swimming holes. Devil's Pool is about 40 feet across and you can take a dip here. You should visit the other pools nearby. The entrance to the trail is on the BR 242 Highway about 12 miles/20 km from Lençóis, toward Seabra.

The Lençóis River has the renowned **Serrano trail**, a light hike with swimming holes lined by rocks polished smooth from the water, just 15 minutes from Lençóis. There are "natural whirlpools" similar to Slippery Falls along the way. There are other trails with waterfalls or swimming holes about an hour or 1½-hour walk from town – the region called Salão de Areias is where the colored sand comes from to make the tiny sand paintings sold in the region.

★The **Marimbus Trail** is a 18.6-mile/30-km trail that was once used to transport diamonds from Mucugê, Igatu, and Andaraí to Lençóis through a wetland region called the Marimbus. The land route is only part of the region – you can hire a boat (see *Travel Guides* above) to take you along the waterways as well for wildlife observation. Then go up the trail to Roncador Falls. The entrance to the trail is alongside the Hotel Colonial in Lençóis.

Canyoning

Mixing trekking and rappel, you can go canyoning at the **Capivari Falls**, about 12 miles/20 km from Lençóis. This popular destination takes about three days and two nights, including camping. The rappel is 118 feet/37 m down the falls. Check with the local travel guides.

★ Trekking

One of the most popular hiking treks is from Lençóis to the **Valley of Capão** (Vale de Capão). It takes approximately three days, stopping at various waterfalls. The trek is long but not very difficult, except for the climb to the top of Smoky Falls. You can sometimes arrange lodging in the park with local squatters or camp in shelters. The trek from Capão to **Andaraí** is highly recommended and takes about five days, but you need an experienced guide. The region is unspoiled, with plenty of remote waterfalls where you can relax.

Rappelling

You can rappel at the **Devil's Pool** (Poço do Diabo) on the Mucugezinho River, on Highway BR 242 in the direction of Sebrae, about 10 miles/16 km from Lençóis. You can also rappel in the quartzite cave at Lapão Grotto. The trip cost about $10 per person (☎ 75-334-1314).

Devil's Pool

What to Buy

There is a colony of artisans in Palmeiras & Caeté Açu. **O Garimpeiro Palmeiras** sells arts and crafts in wood, crystal and stone from Praça Dr. José Gonçalves in Palmeiras. The **Casa de Palhas** sells straw hats and bags, wooden miniatures, and assorted objects, at the Largo de Lapinha, in Palmeiras. **Luiz Solomão Zalebergas** sells ceramics, wood and stone handicrafts in Caeté-Açu (Palmeiras); he is at Sitio Pássaro Azul (☎ 75-229-4015). **Maria de Salvador** sells patchwork and other handicrafts in Caeté-Açu near Palmeiras (☎ 75-229-9019).

Where to Stay

In Chapada Diamantina you can expect clean, simple lodgings, though sometimes very rustic. To enjoy the options of the park, start in Lencois, then maybe spend a night in hippie Capão, after which you can alternate a few days in Andaraí, Mucugê, or Igatu. Remember that guides can take you on overnight trekking adventures into the park itself. Some campsites are listed below.

In Andaraí the **Pousada Sincorá** ($) is recommended, at Avenida Paraguaçu, 120 (www.sincora.com.br, ☎ 75-3335-2210). You can also camp near the Marimbus swamp (ask at the pousada). Or try right on the waterside at the larger **Pousada Ecologica de Andaraí** ($), marked on the Povoado da Passagem Highway between Mucuge and Andarai (www.pousadaecologicadeandarai.com.br, ☎ 75-3335-2176).

In Mucugê, opt for the 18th-century Jesuit home, **Pousasa Mucugê** ($), at Rua Doutor Rodrigues Lima, 30 (☎ 75-3338-2210). Uphill and upscale a bit is the **Alpina Resort Mucugê** ($$), with comfortable lodging on a scenic plateu, at BA-142 (☎ 75-3338-2150). From Andaraí, it's at the Km 40 marker.

Pousada Pedras do Igatu

In Igatu you don't have many options but **Pousada Pedras do Igatu** ($$) on Rua São Sebastião, at the 139 Km marker, has a reputation as the best in town (pedras.igatu@igatu.com.br, ☎ 71-3332-5557 or 75-3335-2281).

In Caeté-Açu (Capão) and Palmeiras expect only basic services and a lot of peace and quiet. **Pousada Candombá** ($), run by the French expat Claude Samuel, has an indigenous sweat lodge, while the luxury suite has a ceiling fan. (candomba@infochapada.com, ☎ 75-3344-1102). **Pousada Lendas do Capão** ($$) on Rua dos Gatos has a restaurant, river for swimming, sauna and a shop with arts and crafts, with chalets (www.valedocapao.com.br, ☎ 75-3344-1141).

At Lençóis, the **Hotel Portal Lençóis** ($$$) has full amenities at an international standard. Rua Chácara Grota in the Alto da Cidade neighborhood (☎ 75-3334-1233). The nice **Hotel de Lençóis** ($$) has a pool (☎ 75-3334-1102). Very charming **Hotel Canto das Águas** ($$) has a river in the background, at Avenida Senhor dos Passos in town (☎ 75-3334-1154). To save money try **Estalagem Alcino** ($) at Rua Tomba Surrão, 139, in town (☎ 75-3334-1171). **Pousada Vila Serrano** ($$), at Alto do Bonfim, 8, is worth a look (☎ 75-3335-1486).

Camping

Campsites offer lodging on the cheap but are not really recommended. You are better off staying either in a pousada or going on a camping trek in the park, but the following offer a space for rent and basic amenities. In Caeté-Açu and Palmeiras **Camping Novo Horizonte** ($) has a bathroom (☎ 75-3344-1065). **Camping Pomar** ($) offers a snack bar (☎ 75-3344-1176). In Lençóis **Pousada Camping Lumiar** ($) is well-organized (☎ 75-3334-1241). In Andarai, if you want to camp at the Marimbus swamp, ask at the **Pousada Sincorá** ($) at Avenida Paraguaçu, 120 (☎ 75-3335-2210).

Where to Eat

Standard fare in Chapada Diamantina includes a big breakfast buffet and dinner at the pousadas. Lunch is usually just a snack as most people are out on the trails during the day. You have more options for restaurants in Lençóis. The local fare is traditional prospector grub like savory country chicken (here called *pirão-de-parida*), and you can find *picanha* or a pizza without difficulty. The local dish *godó* is a stew made from dried beef and starchy green bananas; other dishes are stewed with palm, sometimes served with rice or beans.

In Lençóis, the **Picanha na Praça** ($$) at Praça Otaviano Alves, 62, serves grilled meats for lunch and dinner (☎ 75-3334-1248). The **Lumiar** ($$) serves French cuisine for lunch and dinner and takes Visa credit cards at Praça do Rosário, 70 (☎ 75-3334-1241). The restaurant at the **Hotel Canto das Águas** ($$) is a strong choice, and they take Visa or American Express. At Av. Senhor dos Passos (☎ 75-3334-1154). **Bar Bode Grill** ($), on Rua 10 de Novembro, 26, has a buffet and cold beer (☎75-3334-1600).

In Caeté-Açu (Capão) try the **Lanchonete do Roxo** ($) at Praça da Matriz.

Dining at the Hotel Canto das Águas

In Mucugê, try **Dona Nena's Comida Caseira** ($), ☎ 75-3338-2110, or **Restaurante Sabor e Arte** ($), ☎ 75-3338-2182.

In Igatu there is a pizzeria and some "botecos" with beer on the cobbled main plaza. **Pousada Pedras do Igatu** ($$), on Rua São Sebastião, 139 Km marker, serves local food.

In Andarai the best option for eats is **Pousada Ecológica** ($$) on the Andarai-Mucugê Highway (BR-142) at the Km 4 mark in Passagem, on the banks of the Rio Paraguaçu. You can also try the **Panela de Barro da Norma** ($) on Rua 7 de Setembro.

The Dendê Coast

- Reefs for scuba diving and snorkeling
- Romantic getaways at secluded fishing villages
- Gorgeous beaches seldom traveled

To the south of Salvador, the long coastline called the **Dendê Coast** has only in the past 30 years or so become a popular travel destination, and there are still some out-of-the-way spots. The region gets its name from *dendê*, the strong red palm oil used in Bahian cooking. The charm of the region is that parts like the Maraú Península remain undeveloped, while still close enough to Salvador to add it onto even a short itinerary. The region is an aquatic paradise, with clear waters and reefs perfect for diving and snorkeling. Or you can simply wander the endless beaches. If you prefer well-organized tourist infrastructure and nightlife, where you can still retreat from civilization when you want, try the islands of the Tinharé Archipelago. Visit the resort island of Morro de São Paulo or its quieter, rustic neighbor Boipeba. Farther south are the hard-to-reach and unspoiled beaches along the rugged Maraú Peninsula separating the Camamu Bay from the Atlantic Ocean, one of southern Bahia's best options for ecological tourism.

Morro de São Paulo, Boipeba & the Maraú Península

The Rio Una river delta is sprinkled with 26 tropical islands, including what is called the **Tinharé Archipelago**. The best destinations in this island chain are Morro de São Paulo and Boipeba, with rainforest trails, waterfalls, and secluded sun-blessed beaches. Many of the beaches have not changed much in since Europeans arrived in 1531. In those days Morro de São Paulo was a no man's land for Dutch and French pirates and the indigenous tribes. They vied for control of the Portuguese fort which protected the vital trade route to the colony at Salvador. Morro de São Paulo is the most popular destination in the Archipelago. A few decades ago, it was a practically unknown fishing village, but today thousands of people visit each year, nearly doubling the population during the summer. Locals sometimes grumble about how things have changed. The scenery is still mostly unspoiled. The guest houses – some charming, some tacky – are near the main village called simply the "Villa." You only need to walk a bit to find crystalline tide pools surrounded by lush green vegetation that is essentially the way it was 500 years ago.

To get away from the hubbub, you might prefer Gamboa do Morro, an alternative place to stay with a few inns and restaurants. Or, if you really want to get away from it all, try the little island jewel of Boipeba (see *Side-Trips*). At night, the activity on the archipelago converges around the Villa, with a strange mix of internationals (some who live here), hippies, nature lovers, weekenders from Salvador, and locals, with everybody very laid-back and out for a good time. After sunset, crowds gather on the Caminho da Praia or on the "second beach," where most of the simple bars and restaurants are located, and make merry till dawn. Bring cash, as travelers checks are not accepted and not every place takes credit cards – ask in advance!

How to Get Here

From Salvador you can catch a 25-minute flight to the Morro de São Paulo airport. Flights cost around $120 round-trip, with three departures per day (check rates in advance). The regional carriers are **Adey Taxi Aereo** (☎ 75-3483-1385), or **Aerostar** (☎ 75-3483-1382).

From the Maritime Tourist Center in Salvador you can take a boat to Morro de São Paulo. This is probably the best option. The trip takes two hours, leaving Salvador at 9 am and 2 pm, returning from Morro de São Paulo at 9 am, 11:30 am, and 1 pm. The trips should cost about $15 each way and take about two hours – you need to buy your ticket and verify schedules in advance. Your options are **Comab** (☎ 75-3641-3388) and **Astram** (☎ 75-3641-3365).

The land route takes about five hours, and costs only $10 or so. From Salvador, the easiest way is to take a boat from the Tourist Terminal to Itaparica. From the bus station in Itaparica take an executive bus (executivo) to Valença. There is also a bus (Camurujipe line) from the Salvador Bus Station to Valença. From the maritime terminal in Valença you then take a boat, which is a scenic trip along the mangroves of a little under two hours. It costs a few dollars. Contact **Bio Tour/Marbel** (☎ 75-3483-1062). There is also a 35-minute fast boat (*lancha rapida*) that costs about $5 – contact **Atobás/Jaçanã** (☎ 753-3641-3011).

You can also drive from Salvador. Take the ferryboat from Salvador to Bom Despacho at Itaparica Island (about 50 minutes). From there it is a two-hour drive to Valença along Highway BA-001. At Valença, there is covered parking (it should cost $5 per day) at **Estacionamento Central** (☎ 75-3641-3783).

VALENÇA: WHAT TO DO ON YOUR WAY THROUGH

If you go overland, you can visit 18th-century Valença. The city of about 50,000 residents has a tourist office on Rua Comandante Madureira near the port, open from 8 am-6 pm

(☎ 75-3741-3311). You can get cash at the Banco do Brasil in the old town district or the Bradesco ATM on Rua Governador Gonçalves. It can be impossible to change travelers checks farther on! Check out the port and the nearby main plaza, where nutmeg, which is produced nearby, is dried in the sun. You can see boats being built by hand if you follow the Una River from the central plaza.

If you need to stay overnight for some reason, the **Hotel Rio Mar** ($) is on Avenida Dendezeiros (☎ 75-3741-3408). A seafood restaurant ($) on Comandante Madureira, 88, not far from the tourist office, called **Capixaba**, serves *sopadas* similar to the typical Bahian-style *moqueca* (fish stew). The Bus Station is on Rua d'Água, a little under a mile from the port, with bus service throughout the day to Salvador.

If you get stuck until the next day's ferry, you might want to head to Guaibim beach, about a half-hour north by bus, with several options for lodging and restaurants that you might prefer to those in Valença.

For More Information

Municipal authorities can be reached at ☎ 75-3483-1077, or in Valença at the **Tourism Secretariat**, ☎ 75-3641-3311.

The website **www.morrodesaopaulo.com.br** has excellent information in English, Italian and Portuguese. The local **Puffer Fish Environmental Association** can be reached at baiacudeespinhos@hotmail.com, for info about ecology.

Getting Around

Apart from a few light trucks, the only way to get around is on foot, horseback, or on tractors. They can take you to neighboring Garapuá, Cairu, and Boipeba, or to and from lodging on Second, Third, and Fourth Beach, and the airport. Four-wheel drive pickups run from the Villa to Cairu and Boipeba along rugged trails. Porters flock to carry your bags up the steep stairs to the Villa when you arrive by boat. This is a good idea, but set the fee first or you will get ripped off ($2-$7 is about right). There are pushy guides here too but you can find your way without them if you hire a porter. Just walk up the ramp through the 16th-century city gate.

There are travel services in the Villa for help with lodging, transportation or boat trips without the hastle. To get to the fort, take the slope to the left. Straight ahead is the church and the lighthouse. Rua da Praia is the main road to the beaches. The other is Rua Fonte Grande, where the fountain is.

Electrical current are 220 volts on the archipelago. There is a Banco do Brasil ATM, but no banks, except in Valença. You will need cash for supermarkets, shops and kiosks, though restaurants and guesthouses usually take credit cards. Buy local currency ahead of time to avoid getting ripped off on the exchange rate, but use your hotel safe to store it. It is wise to make lodging reservations ahead of time, especially in high season. Tourist information is available at Rua Com. Madureira, 10 (in Valença), ☎ 75-741-3311, ext. 350. You may find the prices here a bit expensive during high season because of the influx of tourists.

Travel Services

Explora Turismo e Receptivo sells air and catamaran tickets or guided tours (www.patachocas.com.br, ☎ 75-3483-1535 or 75-3483-1112). **Marlins Ecotur Travel Agency** helps with lodging, tickets and tour services, flight reservations and real estate. (www.marlinstur.com, ☎ 75-3483-1385 or 75-3483-1598).

Sightseeing

The ruins of the ★**Fortress of Morro de São Paulo** date from 1630. This was once an important Portuguese outpost guarding the shipping lanes. Today the national historic landmark is a scenic overlook, where you can admire the sunset and spot dolphins below. Under the fortress, a beach appears in low tide, with clear waters for snorkeling. It can be accessed from the fortress or the Villa, which is how everyone refers to the town.

The **Great Fountain** in town was built in 1746 and was once an important supply of ground water for the colonies in Bahia. The fountain was the center of village life then, as it is now. Close by, the **Nossa Senhora da Luz Church** was built in 1845, with relics from the 17th century. People hang out on the steps over the plaza at all hours.

Nossa Senhora da Luz Church
(www.morrodesaopaulo.com.br)

Adventures on Land

Trails

The tall, white **Farol do Morro Lighthouse** is the main lookout point and from here you can see most of the island. Access via First Beach (see *Beaches*). The lighthouse was built in 1855. To get there, take the .

9-mile/1½-km trail, starting at the Nossa Senhora da Luz church, which is covered by tropical vegetation most of the way. It takes about 1½ hours.

The **Heavenly Fountain** (Fonte do Céu) is reached by a 2.4-mile/four-km trail between Morro de São Paulo and Gamboa do Morro. The Gamboa do Morro trail starts in the Villa's main plaza. Along the way there is a waterfall. In Gamboa do Morro there is some basic food and lodging. There is a longer trail – about six miles/10 km – that goes from Gamboa do Morro to Galeão. You can travel on foot or horseback, with horse rentals at Gamboa do Morro. Along the way you can see the plantations that produce the heavy red dendê palm oil.

The village of Galeão is on the channel. Nearby there are two islands, **Manguinho** and **Matinha**, with fishing colonies. On Manguinho, you can spot wild birds, such as cranes (pictured to the right), parakeets, and parrots.

In Galeão, visit the 17th-century **Church of São Francisco Xavier**. If you don't want to hike all the way from the Villa in Morro de São Paulo, you can also go by boat from the Villa to Gamboa do Morro, and then pick up the trail, which is easy to find as it is the only trail in the direction of Galeão through the forest along the channel.

Horseback Riding

Horses can be rented on the island for a few dollars per hour. Ask around at the Villa or call (☎ 75-3483-1070, 75-3483-1056, 75-9147-0952).

Adventures on the Water

★★★Beaches

The beaches in Morro de São Paulo are numbered. Each beach from the Villa heading east has a higher number. The water is clear and warm with coral reefs and shady coconut groves. In all there are 24 miles/40 km of beaches to choose from. Take mineral water and some fruit or other snack with you, as beond Second Beach there are no facilities.

The region has a reputation for nudism and the farther from the Villa you go the more likely you will encounter people au naturel. **First Beach** has mostly guesthouses and during the summer this is where boats moor. The other beaches are nicer. Shacks sell traditional Bahian-style snacks but be careful what you eat due to the heat – the potent *caipirinhas*, drinks made with fresh tropical fruit, are a Villa favorite. **Second Beach** is where the action is, and from a staircase leading to the beach you can get a good view of the ocean. At **Third Beach**, there are more guesthouses, restaurants, and campsites. Here you can hire a boat to Boipeba Island. **Fourth Beach** is huge, with more coral and clear natural pools. The nude beaches of Garapuá are here, with a few guesthouses in the area.

First Beach

At **Fifth Beach** you cross a river and swampy area and the strip of beach runs along a river where there are shacks and guesthouses. On the other side is **Boipeba Island**, which you reach via boat over Rio Inferno, but you have to wait for the tide to come in. You can get to the crossing by Jeep or tractor from the Villa, but the hike is enjoyable. In the other direction from the numbered beaches, to the west, there is **Rocky Point** (Ponta da Pedra), which is also called **Gamboa Beach**, about 30 minutes from the docks at the Villa. Here you can take a mud bath, supposedly good for you. You can get here by boat too (see *Boat Excursions*). From this beach you can access **Gamboa do Morro**, a village with a few guesthouses and restaurants, and from there take the trail back to the Villa. This tiny town is close enough so you can walk back and forth to the Villa.

★Boat Excursions

Tickets are sold in the Villa for sightseeing cruises at travel services and guesthouses. There are several options, but **Companhia de Mergulho** on First Beach has high-quality trips with English-speaking guides and snorkeling gear included. They offer three options: route one, which goes around the island to Garapuá and Boipeba, stopping at natural pools from 9 am-5 pm, which costs around $20; route two, which goes to Ponta da Ilha, Galeão, Manguezais with lunch in Gamboa do Morro, plus a mud bath and snorkeling, before returning to the Villa, from 9 am-3 pm on a fast boat; or a trip to Gamboa with nature walks to the Heavenly Fountain and mud baths in the village, both of which cost about $15. Boats are equipped with bathroom and stereo. Custom trips are also available. Make reservations a day in advance at the shop or via reserves@ciadomergulho.com.br, ☎ 75-3483-1200.

★Diving

A good reason to visit Morro de São Paulo is the diving. The water is warm enough so you won't need a wetsuit, with average temperature about 27°C/81°F. Visibility is good on average, between 50-60 feet/15-20 m, with the best time to go from December to April.

Anemone
(S. Shebs)

There is a shallow reef off First Beach, which is three-30 feet/one-10 m, with sea life including anemones, batfish, crabs, and schools of sardines. Other reefs with plenty of colorful sea-life, such as princess parrot fish and doctor fish, can be reached by a short boat ride. Some reefs have brackish water and unique sea life due to river run-off from the island. All are fairly simple dives, including a drift dive, but there are some with arches you can swim through.

There are a few advanced dives as well. One is from 112-128 feet/35-40 m at Pedra dos Meros but it is an hour and a half away and can only be reached in calm seas. Another is a wreck dive at 128 feet/40 m, but the wreck is mostly dismantled.

A two-tank dive with full equipment rental costs, including boat and guide, costs about $50 (a bit more for the VIP fast boat), while a one-tank beach dive with full equipment rental and guide costs about $25. Night dives are available.

Companhia de Mergulho (☎ 75-3483-1200, www.ciadomergulho.com.br) is a PADI-certified dive operator on the island with a choice of boats, including a fast VIP boat for the longer trips. The main boat is a 14-m motorized sailboat with a capacity for 18 divers. It has a three-cylinder MWM motor, lateral dive platforms, radio, sonar, stereo and bathroom. Night dives available. Reservations should be made one day in advance. The dive shop is in the Villa near First Beach, at the entrance to Pousada Farol do Morro. They open Monday through Saturday 8 am-6 pm, Sunday 8 am-1 pm.

Sailing

At the time of writing a Sailing Club (Clube de Vela) was being built on Gamboa Beach. The plan is to rent laser and tornado class sailboats as well as 14- and 16-foot catamarans. If you sail, this will be a fantastic way to see the island once it's ready.

Sea Kayaking

At Third Beach, you can paddle around the exotic Ilha do Caitá island's coral reefs. Rentals cost under $10 per hour on First Beach – contact **Companhia de Mergulho** (☎ 75-3483-1200).

★★Snorkeling

The best spots are First Beach (the Pedra do Moleque reefs), Third Beach (Ilha do Caitá), and the natural pools at Fourth Beach, with best visibility at low tide. Snorkeling kits (mask, snorkel and fins) can be rented for $3-$4 per day at various points on the island.

Surfing

There are a few places where you can surf on the main island – the best is First Beach. There is also surfing at the Fourth Beach. Bring extra wax as a gift if you want to befriend the locals. Surfing is best in the winter months (June through September).

Wakeboarding & Banana Boating

Wakeboarding at Gamboa is a new option for Morro de São Paulo. A 40-minute trip costs $20-$25, all equipment included. A tamer option is the banana boat, an oblong inflatable tube drawn at high speeds and whipped about – hold on! A 30-minute ride is $5-$10. **Companhia de Mergulho** (☎ 75-3483-1200).

Where to Go Out

Nightlife in Morro de São Paulo is at the Villa and the nearby beaches. With only two streets, it is not hard to find the crowds. The main plaza has a crafts fair, while a lot of people also visit the shops, which sell souvenirs, clothing, and beach gear. On any given night at one of the bars or on Second Beach, there are raucous parties, fueled by tropical fruit drinks made with cachaça. You can also try the spots along road that leads to the lighthouse. By sunrise, there are usually still a few survivors squinting at you near the fountain.

Where to Eat

The restaurants are in the Villa or near Second Beach. Don't expect great cuisine on the island but you can a least get some decent fish. Scout it out and eat where everybody else is. Hours depend on the tourist flow. Some recommendations in the Villa are **Bem Me Quer** ($$) and **Sabor da Terra** ($$).

Where to Stay

There are a plenty of options here, but you might want to make reservations during the holidays. Take a look before deciding, and try to ignore the hustlers who get a commission. Prices go up during the busy seasons. If you want to avoid the crowds and the noise, consider staying somewhere away from the Villa and Second Beach.

Hotel Praia do Encanto

Pousada Solar do Morro ($) offers good value with a pool, at Praca Aureliano Lima, 155 (www.pousadadomorro.com.br, solar@mma.com.br). **Pousada Villa das Pedras** ($$) is at Second Beach close to the beach. (www.villadaspedras.com.br). **Hotel Ventos Eliseos** ($$) takes a bit of a walk to get to the top of a hill and the eco-park where it is located, but it's in a beautiful spot (www.ventosaliseos.com). Access is via Third Beach. **Hotel Puerto Beach** ($$) is at Fourth Beach (www.hotelpuertobeach.com.br) in a spacious area with good services (including transport to and from the hotel). **Hotel Praia do Encanto** ($$) has a very good reputation, and is at Fifth Beach away from the Villa, with leisure options (www.praiadoencanto.com.br). The chalets are air-conditioned.

Boipeba Island

Boipeba gets its name from the indigenous Tupi word for sea turtle, "mboi pewa," meaning "flat snake." Densely forested, with dunes and scrub vegetation along with coconut-palm trees around the deserted beaches, this is a little slice of paradise. The island is an environmental protection area with interesting flora and fauna, including armadillos, reptiles, and birds. Jesuits founded a mission here in 1537, which became a refuge from onslaughts by hostile indigenous groups, then a village. Today the island has about 1,600 residents, who live mostly by fishing shrimp, crabs and other fish, by growing coconuts or other fruit, and by tourism. Around sunset in the village there is occasionally a round of *capoeira*, the fighting dance, or other limited entertainment. If you want to rough it a bit, while still having fresh food and reasonably comfortable lodging, Boipeba is a good option.

Getting There & Getting Around

Getting here on foot is a great way to see the east side of the big island (see *Beaches*) but it takes all day to hike it. Tractors and boats also run to and from the Villa. Check for departure and return times in the Villa but they tend to get to Boipeba at around 12:30 and leave about 3:30 pm, arriving at the Villa around 6 pm. You will probably want to stay overnight in Boipeba. On the island you can get around by foot, on horseback or by tractor. It is also possible to make advance arrangements with guesthouses for getting there from Salvador or Ilhéus, first by boat then by taxi or minibus along a circuitous route to the village of Torrinha, then by boat to Boipeba, taking about five hours. At the Villa in Morro de São Paulo you can hire a boat to Boipeba, which is the quickest way and avoids waiting for boats over the river. There is limited boat service from Valença's Maritime Terminal to Boipeba. There are about 25 places to stay on the island, some more remote than others. To help with lodging or transport in this isolated destination, see *Travel Services* listed in this section.

For More Information

There is a great website at www.ilhaboipeba.org.br, but the English version was not yet working at the time of writing. There are pictures though.

Sightseeing

The **Old Boipeba Church of the Divine Holy Spirit**, built by Jesuits in 1610, is the island's main monument. This national historic landmark was expanded in the 19th century, but some original elements remain such as the typical 17th-century layout in the form of a cross, the sacristy, and the bell tower. It's in the village.

Where to Stay

Pousada Vila Sereia ($$) is a tranquil and very charming guesthouse with only four bungalows under the towering coconut trees on the beach. Breakfast is served at your porch. English spoken. They can help organize local guides. ☎ 75-3653-6045 or 9967-2878.

Pousada Santa Clara ($$) is a very peaceful guesthouse about 300 feet/100 m from the beach, with tropical vegetation, flowers and fruit trees. Breakfast is included at the on-site restaurant, and the proprietors can find you a guide. English spoken. ☎ 75-3653-6085, chasbras@terra.com.br.

Pousada Tassimirim ($$) is an oceanfront guesthouse with garden and small amphitheater for presentations or events (up to 50 people) with simple rustic bungalows. Breakfast and one à la carte item is included in the fare from the on-site restaurant. There is a boat available and the proprietors can arrange for guides. ☎ 75-3653-6030 or 75-9981-2378, tassimirim@ilhaboipeba.org.br.

Where to Eat

Generally you will eat at your pousada. The **Lanchonete da Ilha** ($) is in front of the river crossing on Rua do Porto, with simple snacks at modest prices. For sweets and treats, try **Lanchonete Ioiô Iaiá** ($), with fruit juices and sweets – also near the river crossing.

The Maraú Peninsula

The Bay of Camamu is surrounded by mangrove stands, coconut groves, and rainforest. It is a very rustic locale at the southernmost point of the Coast of Dendê, just to the northeast of Itacaré and the neighboring Cocoa Coast. It is the third-largest bay in Brazil after Rio and Salvador and the town on the inside of the bay is the departure point for the Maraú Peninsula. Once inhabited by indigenous groups, Jesuits founded a mission here in 1561. This gorgeous peninsula has 24 miles/40 km of primordial beaches and tide pools nestled amid coral reefs and waterfalls. Still lightly traveled by tourists (for now at least), Maraú is one best destinations in Bahia due to its pristine condition, but it also has some first-rate lodging options. Inland, you can discover streams and waterfalls with bubbling pools for a secluded romantic adventure with someone special.

The main town on the peninsula is **Barra Grande**, a typical Bahian fishing village with sandy, unpaved streets. The humid tropical climate has an average temperature 82°F/28°C year-round. From this sun-drenched tip of Maraú Peninsula you can choose to explore the calm mangrove stands on the inside of the bay or the beaches facing the open ocean, or take a boat to explore nearby semi-deserted tropical islands. Three days here, not counting transport time (which can be consider-able), would be well spent. Keep in mind that the region is off the beaten track and has very limited infrastructure. The main appeal is the coastline and mostly untouched beauty of the forests, the clear ocean waters, rock formations, rivers, coral reefs and colorful fauna everywhere. If you don't mind roughing it a bit to get here, Maraú is a great getaway far from the typical crowds and tacky hotspots in parts of southern Bahia.

How to Get Here

The starting point for exploring the peninsula is **Camamu**, reached by car or bus from Salvador by Highway BA 001, the main coastal highway in Bahia. By car, take the ferryboat from Salvador to Itaparica Island (about 50 minutes), at Bom Despacho. From there it is a four-hour drive to Camamu along Highway BA-001. There are several buses per day to and from Camamu and Valença or Salvador. Once in Camamu, take a boat to the peninsula. Boats leave for the 35-minute cruise from Camamu to Barra Grande Monday through Saturday at 7 am, 9 am, 1 and 4:30 pm, and on Sundays and holidays from 8-11 am – but schedules tend to change without warning. The return trips leave Monday through Friday at 8 am, 10 am, 2 and 5:30 pm, Sundays and holidays, 10 am and 5 pm.

The fast boat costs about $10 and the slower one is just a few dollars. If you miss the boat, don't despair – you can hire a local easily enough to take you to Barra Grande, but it will probably cost you more. You may notice that your boat zig-zags through the port – this is because the colonists placed boulders in the bay to protect against Dutch and French pirates. If you drive to Camamu, parking costs only a few dollars per day, but you should take your key with you rather than leave it at the parking lot and leave nothing valuable inside.

On most maps there is a road called BR-030 that extends into the Maraú Peninsula, but huge potholes, especially in the rainy season from May through October, make this route next to impossible without a Jeep and very scary with one. You can hire transport in **Itacaré** (see the *Cocoa Coast*) – it takes about two hours to Barra Grande along this so-called road.

A third option is an air taxi from Camamu, but this costs more and lacks the charm of the boat trip. There are regular 30-minute air taxis Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. Contact **Natur e Mar Turismo** (see *Travel Services*).

Getting Around

Once on the Maraú Peninsula, Barra Grande has the best facilities. Farther south on the peninsula there are other places. At Barra Grande, you can rent a dune buggy that will run you at least $40 per day plus fuel. Despite the bite, the dune buggy is your best friend on the peninsula, letting you wallow over the torturous dirt roads when it rains, and speeding you along in comfort and style when it doesn't. You can also rent a boat to get you around but this is at least $80 per day (normally for up to four people). Another option is to hire one of the tractors that haul tourists like sunburned logs along the coast to the main beaches, such as Taipu de Fora. If you don't want to rent a buggy this is your best choice.

You have to fix a rate each time but it shouldn't cost more than $3-$4, depending on how far you want to go. As is common in out-of-the-way beach areas of Brazil, you can hitch a ride from fellow tourists if there is space. This is also a great way to meet people (using good judgment of course) and, if you have a buggy, the same rule applies. And, you can always hike. The scenery is great.

Villages of the Peninsula

Barra Grande
(R. Peletey)

The main village on the peninsula is **Barra Grande**, with simple houses amid the coconut and cashew groves. A few foreigners live here, but the overall atmosphere is rustic. About a mile and half away is **Campinhos**, which is great for snorkeling because of the sea life along the reef and deep, clear waters. **Maraú** is to the south of the peninsula on the bay side, and is divided like Salvador, into upper and lower cities (but on a much smaller scale). Missionaries came here in 1705 and lived in an indigenous village that has vanished. From the upper city, there is a great view of the town and the bay. On Saturdays there is a rustic open-air fair here, with arts and crafts made from coconut and wood, and exotic produce. Apart from fishing, the poor local economy is mainly subsistence agriculture and tourism. Expect only the most basic infrastructure in Maraú. From here you can explore local ruins or head up the Rio Maraú, with its mangrove stands and waterfalls seldom visited by tourists.

For More Information

The **Bahia Tourism Secretariat** (Bahiatursa) in Salvador has information at their booths, or check www.bahia.com.br, ☎ 71-3370-8432. There is also a private website with good information and photos in English and Portuguese – www.barragrande.net.

Travel Services

Natur e Mar Turismo offers local transport services such as air taxi, cars, boats, as well as tour guide services (www.naturemar.tur.br, ☎ 73-3255-2343). **Cristina Turismo** has motorboats and fishing trips (www.cristinaturismo.com.br, ☎ 73-3255-2137 or 73-3255-1388). **Camamu Adventure** offers transport services and boat trips to and from Camamu and Barra Grande as well as bay excursions (camamuadventure@uol.com.br, ☎ 73-3255-2138 or 73-3258-6236).

Adventures on Land

★★The **Tremembé Falls** are up the Rio Maraú. You get there by boat, usually visiting the colorful mangrove stands along the Rio do Céu and the Rio Maraú. Fresh water falls directly into the salt water of the bay, and there you can take a swim under the falls. There is a short hike up the falls to a rubber tapping plantation and the ruins of a sawmill powered by the river. Nearby, you can go on other moderately brisk trails that lead to waterfalls, manioc and cocoa plantations, and the tiny village of Tremembé. It's in the forest filled with ferns, bromeliads and anthills and pools where you can swim. Ask at your hotel for guides in town.

Tremembé Falls
(Salvador Charters)

Adventures on the Water

★★★Beaches

There are many different beaches to choose from, most deserted, with colors that call to mind the Caribbean. The beaches on the oceanic side have bigger surf, clear waters and reefs. The beaches on the bay are scenic, but the water is not as nice. **Barra Grande**, the main village, is not great for swimming. The beach is called **Mangueiras**, and there are shacks here selling seafood and drinks. But head north along the coast a short ways to the point of the rocky peninsula. This is Ponta do Mutá, where there is a lighthouse and at one time a Portuguese fort. **Três Cocqueiros** is the first long beach on the Atlantic Coast, including a few homes amid the coconut palms, with reefs and heavy surf. From here, there are about 30 miles/50 km of beaches down the peninsula. The next beach is **Bombaça**, which extends four miles/seven km to become **Taipu de**

Taipu de Fora

Fora, where there is an inlet with corals great for snorkeling. At both you can find lodging and beach huts serving snacks and drinks.

The next is **Cassange**, a long beach with flat surf and a lake along the way where you can swim. Farther on is **Saquaíra**, which is virtually deserted, apart from a little fishing village with a few guesthouses. Onward south, you come to **Algodões** and **Arandi**, where you can find tide pools. These are the closest coastal beaches to the town of Maraú on the other side of the peninsula facing the bay. The last beach before arriving at Rio de Contas and the resort town of Itacaré (see *Cocoa Coast*), is **Piraganga**, where the surf picks up and the landscape changes to the characteristic inlets and harbors of the Cocoa Coast.

★Boat & Island Excursions

Boat trips are a great way to see the coastal mangroves and islands of the Camamu Bay. In the morning you can rent a motorboat or a trawler to take you around, while in the summer months you can board a schooner at the port for a more comfortable ride, though the waters are sheltered and calm. There are 10 islands, all mostly deserted. The most interesting is **Pedra Furada**, meaning "pierced rock," with lush vegetation and a formation like an arch caused by erosion. The tiny island has fresh water and a nice beach, with a place to eat.

Canoeing

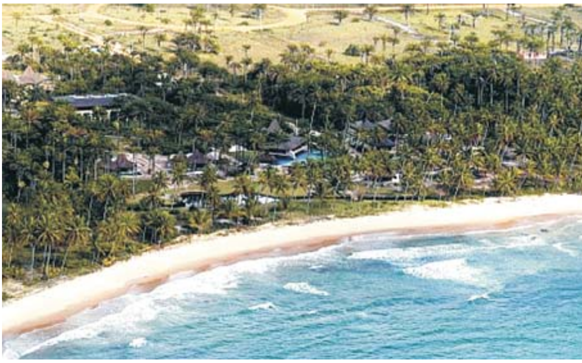
Canoeing is a great way to explore the Camamu Bay and its islands. There is an association of guides in Camamu (☎ 73-3230-1520).

Where to Stay

Because of the difficult access to the peninsula's nicest spots, it helps to stay at places that offer transportation, but there is really no need to stay in Barra Grande unless you want to.

Kiaroa Beach Resort ($$$$), on the Bombaça beach, was opened in 2003. This is a sophisticated and well designed place, with a good restaurant. No kids under 14. (kiaroa@kiaroa.com.br, ☎ 71-3272-1320 or 71-3272-0454).

Natura Pura ($$$) is at Cassange Beach in a spacious area with good leisure options like diving equipment and tennis courts. (www.naturapura.com.br, ☎ 73-3258-2181 or 73-3258-2276). **Pousada Lagoa do Cassange** ($$) has chalets facing Cassange beach, and arranges guide services. (www.maris.com.br, ☎ 72-3255-2348.



Kiaroa Beach Resort

Aytyaram Hotel Village ($$$) has quality lodging at Taipu de Fora beach, facing the ocean with natural pools. (www.aytyaram.com.br, ☎ 73-3211-2010).

Pousada Marau ($$) is at Praia de Saquaira, near Cassange lake. (www.pousadamarau.com.br, ☎ 73-3258-2113).

Where to Eat

The **Pousada de Cassange** ($$) between the lake and the ocean at Cassange beach has excellent seafood in traditional style. You should either make reservations in advance or be prepared to wait at least an hour. **Tapera** ($$), on Rua da Praia (☎ 258-6119), serves excellent seafood. Open 12–10 pm during high season. Call during low season for hours. **Matataúba** ($$), on the beach of Ilha de Campinho, serves pizza for lunch and dinner (☎ 258-6265).

The Cocoa Coast

- Chic resorts in a laid back surfing town
- Sport fishing expeditions off the South Atlantic
- See rainforest wildlife and secluded waterfalls

At the southernmost tip of the Maraú Pennisula, the coastline of Bahia becomes more convoluted. This is called the Cocoa Coast, which gets is name from cacao, known in Portuguese as *cacau*, which is grown here. This white, oily fruit (from which chocolate is derived) was once so valuable it was like gold. Wealth flowed into this region during the cocoa boom, leaving sumptuous mansions in the cities such as Ilhéus, where the illustrious writer Jorge Amado

Cacao beans in a pod

made his home for many years. Witches Broom, a kind of mold thought to come from Africa, then wiped out the crop entirely almost overnight. Today the region is starting to recover but remains a relatively poor part of the country. Even so, this sunny section of the Atlantic rainforest enjoys great weather most of the year with temperatures ranging from 77 to 86°F/25-30°C, rocketing to 104°F/40°C from December to March. The rainy season is from June to August. Dozens of wildlife sanctuaries are tucked behind miles of coastline amid dense coconut groves and mangrove stands. Basically it's a beach destination, but the nightlife heats up during the summer. There are some excellent resorts here that cater to moneyed Brazilians near the hippie surfing town of Itacaré. As a rule, **Itacaré** is the best destination, with its native appeal and exotic Colonial architecture. **Ilhéus** is really just a stop along the way to the surfing areas and the beaches. Or, if you prefer, there is rafting and sea kayaking, rappel and wildlife observating. In sleepy, historic **Canavieras**, to the south, there is some of the best blue marlin fishing in South America.

Itacaré

Itacaré *(F. Leminh)*

Itacaré is a laid-back surfing town on the estuary of the Contas River. Jorge Amado once called this the "Búzios of Bahia" (see *Búzios* in *Rio de Janeiro*). Over time it has become reasonably sophisticated and is one of the better destinations in Bahia. The highway into town passes through a specially designed park paved with tunnels, to protect the passage of land crabs, and sky-bridges for primates. It was founded by Jesuits in the 17th century, and you can still visit the São Miguel cathedral, which is over 300 years old. The Colonial buildings of the historical district today have been restored and converted to lodging or shops.

The beaches are the main attraction, but you might not want to overlook the many hikes, waterfalls and swimming holes tucked away in the rainforest nearby. The summer holidays bring a mix of Brazilians, Argentines, and other internationals. In off-season, Itacaré empties out. There are some very sophisticated resorts with excellent value and good dining. The authentic local scene keeps you from feeling as if you are in

Disneyland. Things get going in the town at sunset around the main road on Praia da Concha. In two or three days you can see what you want, making this a great side-trip from Salvador (if the travel time overland doesn't discourage you).

How to Get Here

The closest local airport is at Ilhéus or Salvador (international). From the Ilhéus airport it is 36 miles/60 km to Itacaré, very easily reached from São Paulo or Rio as well. Buses to Itacaré also leave daily from Ilhéus at 7 am-7 pm – one comfortable option is the **Águia Branca** busline (☎ 71-4004-1010). The trip takes about six hours.

Some long-distance buses travel to neighboring Itabuna. If for some reason you get stuck in Itabuna, there is a local bus that runs to and from Ilhéus more or less on the half-hour from the bus station at Praça Cairu (it should cost about a dollar). The station is out of the way, but all "centro" buses pass there to take you to Itacaré. You don't want to stay in Itabuna.

If you drive from Salvador, take a ferryboat to the Island of Itaparica and, from there, Highway BA-001 from Nazaré to Travessão (about 90 miles/150 km), then BR-101 60 miles/100 km to Ubaitaba, and finally 36 miles/60 km to Itacaré.

Getting Around

From the bus stop there is a short walk to the center of Itacaré. Porters are there to help find you lodging. Fix a fee ahead of time; no more than $10 is about right. In high season from December to February, prices can double. Advance reservations are wise near the holidays. There is a lot to do on foot but renting a mountain bike in town will increase your mobility. Some of the nicer beaches (see below) are on the north side of the river. A raft or the ferry can be hired at the river for a few dollars to take you across. From there you just walk the coastline until you find a suitable beach.

For More Information

The Internet site **www.itacare.com** has tons of information. The **Itacaré Surfing Association** has an English surfer resource, with weather and tide reports. E-mail surfhouse@uol.com.br or cal ☎ 73-3251-2194. You can access the Internet at **Hawaii Aqui**, on the Beach Road at Pituba, ☎ 73-3251-3050.

Guides

For the beaches and some of the trails you should not need special guide services, but to get to the inland trails they are usually required. Some offer airport transfers, but they may try to rope you into a pousada or a local package trip. It's a good idea to check out what the other guides are offering before you pay for anything.

As elsewhere along the Bahia coast you may encounter solicitous "friends" who offer assistance and expect some kind of reward. These are not the same as registered tour guides and in most cases you should decline.

Here are some options: **Eco Trip** (☎ 73-9975-0243 or 73-3251-2191), **Itacaré Ecoturismo** (☎ 73-3251-2224 or 73-3251-2443), **Planeta Eco** (☎ 73-3251-3560 or 73-9975-1106), **Raiz Ecoturismo** (☎ 73-3251-2474 or 73-9975-1030), or **Zebra & Pepê** (☎ 73-3251-2354, 73-3251-2267 or 73-9975-0200). **Sul da Bahia Reservas** is a travel agent with occasional promotions that might be worth considering (☎ 73-3251-3142).

Adventures on Land

Hikes & Trails

When the temperatures are not blazing hot, you might enjoy a morning hike through the Atlantic rainforest and a refreshing swim in a waterfall or spring. Normally you will need a guide.

Cashew trees (E. Gaba)

The **Piracanga Ecological Sanctuary** has white sand and brackish lakes with cashew trees and coconut groves squawking with parrots and cranes, among other species – check with local tour guides who offer trips here.

Janela da Gindiba is a light trail for groups up to 10, while **Refuge of the Angels** has more rugged trails, along with the option of a refreshing swim. Count on leaving around 9 am and coming back in mid-afternoon, with two or 2½ hours of walking. Ask at the **Socio-Environmental Institute of Southern Bahia** (☎ 73-3251-2456).

The short, steep trail is **Alto da Esperança**, ending at a natural spring for a swim. The trip takes about an hour and 20 minutes, and leaves weekends and holidays at 9:30 am, getting you back in time for lunch. Reservations: Cláudio Lôpo (☎ 73-3251-2257).

Hiking along the coast to seldom-visited beaches is a great option that takes from four to six hours, depending on where you begin and if you have to wait at the river crossing. Local guides offer packages that help with the transport but most of the beaches you can get to on foot without difficulty. If you explore beaches yourself, keep in mind that access to some areas is through private land and can require a fee. Make sure you return early enough to avoid getting lost overnight in the dark!

Horseback Riding

At the Praia de São José you can find the **Horseback Club of Itacaré**, with rentals and instruction, which is not a bad option for getting around if you are an experienced rider. ☎ 73-3251-2400 (ext 1106) or 73-9975-1282.

Mountain Biking

The **Ilhéus-Itacaré Highway Park** is an environmental protection area that covers 42 miles/70 km of winding BA-001 Highway. This experimental "ecological highway" allows you to see the coast up-close. The highway was designed with overhead nets for monkeys and tunnels under the road to let crabs scuttle to safety. There are two bicycle trails – one in Ilhéus about 5.4 miles/nine km long at the entrance to the Enchanted Lake, and the other in Itacaré, 3.6 miles/six km long. The highway is itself a two-hour scenic road trip by car. Bike rentals and guides are available in town.

Rappelling

There is guided cascading 18 miles/30 km from Itacaré at Taboquinhas (see *Hikes & Trails*) down a 45-foot waterfall called Noré Falls, which is feasible for beginners. There is a five-hour canyon trail through the rainforest along the Rio de Contas, ending at a waterfall and swimming hole, and you don't have to rappel the waterfall to enjoy the scenery. You can drive there on Highway BA-001 toward Ilhéus. At the village of Marambaia, take a nine-mile/15-km dirt road. Check with the local tour guides who handle these trips.

Adventures on Water

★★Beaches

The beaches of Itacaré are lined by coconut groves, scrub vegetation and mangroves. To get there you may have to take a ferry or canoe over the river. Some of the beaches are accessible only at low tide or through shaded paths in the forest, so be alert to where you are going, especially late in the afternoon, as the nights can be very dark. Many of the beaches have fresh-water cascades.

Going clockwise around the coast from downtown, **Praia da Concha**, close to the city, is where you can relax under the coconut trees with

Prainha Beach

grass-roofed huts serving drinks and snacks. Around the point from Concha, **Praia do Resende** is also frequently crowded. **Praia do Costa** is about half a mile/one km from the city and virtually deserted as well, surrounded by coconut groves. Warning: dangerous surf! Forested **Praia da Ribeira**, on the next little cove, has a fresh-water spring and cascade. Shacks sell drinks and snacks. This is a very popular beach during the summer. **Praia do Siriaco** is nearby and reached by boat or by a trail through private property that takes about 30 minutes (you will have to pay a small fee). Down the coast a bit is one of the most beautiful beaches in Brazil, **Prainha**, which is crowded most of the time, with lush vegetation and a coconut grove. The **Praia de São José** is next to the famous Itacaré Eco Resort (see *Where to Stay*). Note, this is a private beach and if you are not staying at the resorts here you will have to pay a day fee of about $60 per person, which includes lunch and leisure activities. It's not a rip-off – the area has been turned into a beautiful ecological preserve.

Kayaking

Ask in town about kayak trips up the Rio de Contas, past scenic islands, mangrove stands and with a dip at the Noré Falls to cool off. Local outfitters can provide equipment rentals, transport and guides. The trip takes a few hours. You can rent sea kayaks to go out by yourself on the calm waters at Praia da Concha, close to the city.

★Rafting

About 18 miles/30 km from Itacaré is one of Brazil's best rafting runs – **Taboquinhas**. The whitewater descent down the Rio de Contas is ranked level III and IV, passing through the rainforest along the same river that begins in Chapada Diamantina. Taboquinhas is about nine miles/15 km from the village of Marambaia along a dirt road, off of Highway BA-001. You should bring mineral water and a snack. Rafting packages are available with local outfitters (see above).

★★★Surfing

You can rent boards at **Hawaii Aqui** in Pituba (☎ 73-3251-3050). The **Itacaré Surf Assocation** has instruction, guides, information, and board rentals. E-mail surfhouse@uol.com.br or call ☎ 73-3251-2194.

Where to Eat

There are a number of options for eating out in Itacare, either in town or at the beaches.

Casarão Amarelo ($$$) is a converted mansion from the cocoa period in town (☎ 73-3251-3133).

Dedo da Moça ($$$), in the old town section next to the church, has international cuisine (☎ 73-251-3372 or 73-251-3391).

Estrela do Mar ($$$) serves Bahian specialties on Praia da Concha at the Aldeia do Mar pousada (☎ 73-251-2230).

Mãe Josefina ($$$$), at the Itacaré Eco Resort on São José beach, serves traditional Bahian specialties and has a well-stocked whisky bar (☎ 73-251-3133).

Mel & Mar ($$$) has music, dancing and Bahian food on Rua D near Praia da Concha about 150 feet from the beach (☎ 73-3251-3105).

Estrela do Mar

Where to Stay

Resorts

Going high-end is a good way to enjoy the region. The town itself is pretty much a surfers' hangout with a lot of rowdy vacationers and beach bums, but there are currently two resorts that have an excellent reputation, and are secluded without being isolated from the town.

The newest is **★★Txai Resort** ($$$$$), on the beach, has chic private bungalows on stilts among the cocoa groves. They are discretely separated, each with an ocean view and wood deck. Services include a

Txai Resort

candlelight canoe trip along the Rio de Contas River, during a full moon or at sunset. (☎ 73-3634-6936, www.txai.com.br).

The **Itacaré Eco Resort** ($$$$$) has two private beaches in a wildlife preserve with very careful service. Until the Txai, this was the only resort in Itacaré and is still considered one of the best ecological beach resorts in Brazil. (☎ 73-3251-2233).

Hotels

Villa de Ocaporan ($$$) is a festive, high-quality hotel near town and the beaches Resende and Concha. (☎ 73-3251-2470, www.villadeocaporan.com.br).

Itacaré Eco Village ($$$) is family-oriented with bungalows that have kitchens, in front of Praia de São José. (☎ 71-3251 2400, www.eco-village.com.br).

Aldeia do Mar

Aldeia do Mar ($$$) has very pleasant chalets on Praia do Concha. (☎ 71-3356-4344, www.aldeiadomar.tur.br).

Pousadas

Pousada Sage Point ($$$) is a charming pousada with comfortable amenities, at Praia Tiririca. (☎ 73-3251-2030, www.pousadasagepoint.com.br).

Pousada Casa das Aroeiras ($$) is at Praia da Concha. (☎ 73-3251-3067, casadasaroeiras@hotmail.com.br).

Side-Trips

Ilhéus

Ilhéus has a handful of interesting sights and was the home of the Brazilian writer Jorge Amado. Ilhéustur at Avenida Soares Lopes, 1741 (☎ 73-3634-3510) has basic information and town maps.

The airport is at Praia do Pontal, about two miles/3½ km from the city. Take a taxi downtown from the airport (☎ 73-3231-7629). It should cost less than $10. Or buses marked "centro" leave every hour or so for town.

Traditionally in January on the Rio Cachoeira, an assortment of boats and rafts follow the historic journeys of the Two Maximillians, 19th-century explorers from Spain and Mexico, and end in a jamboree with a trio elétrico sound system. The event, organized by the **Maramata Foundation** (☎ 73-3634-1861) and the **Ilhéus Cultural Foundation** (☎ 73-3634-8986), has an uncertain future due to local politics.

Fans of Brazilian novelist Jorge Amado might enjoy the **Jorge Amado House** built in the 1920s. Next door is the **Academy of Letters** and the **Ilhéus Historical Institute** at Rua Jorge Amado, number 21, open from 9-12 am and 2-4 pm.

Golden-headed lion monkey

★**Ecoparque de Una** is a rainforest park 27 miles/45 km south of town, where you can see wildlife such as the golden-headed lion monkey. Entrance is about $5. Take the Ilhéus-Itacaré highway to the 65 Km marker. (☎ 73-634-2179).

★**Enchanted Lake** can be reached from Ilhéus via boat trip on the Rio Almeida. Along the way you pass by scenic cocoa plantations, mangrove stands, and the Atlantic forest. Excursions leave at 9 am and return at 5 pm. The trip costs about $10, including a snack. Board at the club called Clube Náutilus, about hald a mile/one km inland from Praia do Jóia. (☎ 73-639-1494).

Bar Vesúvio ($$) was featured in Jorge Amado's novel *Gabriela, Cravo e Canela*, an old dilapidated mansion serving Middle Eastern snacks and drinks at Praça Dom Eduardo, 190 (☎ 73-231-1593).

About an hour south of Ilhéus is the **Island of Comandatuba** ($$$$$) resort (www.comandatuba.com.br). If you are looking for nightlife and local culture, you might prefer Itacaré. Reservations can be made via their booking service, Turnet (☎ 55-11-3257-3111).

Marlin Fishing in the Canavieiras Islands

Canavieiras is a string of islands on the estuary of the Rio Pardo with some of the best blue marlin fishing in South America. Better known as "Canes" (KAH-knees), some 69 miles/115 km south of Ilhéus, Canavieiras is a remnant of the cocoa boom.

A landing strip receives flights from Ilhéus, or you can take a bus. The bus station is at Rua Professor Assis Gonçalves (Cidade Nova). Canavieiras has very limited basic services There are no currency exchange facilities, though you might have luck at the hotels or at the ATMs of the Banco do Brasil, Rua 7 de Setembro (☎ 73-3297-1211) or the Bradesco at Rua Professor Assis Gonçalves.

The Tourism Secretariat, if all else fails, is at Praça da Bandeira, 1 (☎ 73-3284-1522).

For help with arranging your trip, you can contact **Açu Turismo**, at Avenida Felinto Melo, 18 (☎ 73-284-2248 or 73-9137-2062). Or try **EVC Turismo**, at Rua General Pederneiras, 597, downtown (☎ 73-284-1866 or 73-9981-8918).

The settlement on **Atalaia**, the "big island," was once home to prosperous cocoa and sugar producers, who in 1881 built the tree-lined streets and mansions on the archipelago, linking it over time with bridges to the mainland and the other six islands of the chain.

The archipelago has 42 miles/70 km of isolated, coconut-lined beaches, many with clear waters, calm surf, and mangroves. Temperatures are a bit milder here than the rest of Bahia – about 76°F/24½°C on average.

There is a seldom-traveled wetland channel system that links the Rio Pardo to the Rio Jequitnhonha, through what the locals call a pantanal. This is a great place to see cranes, parrots, parakeets, and other native birds close-up in the exotic mangroves. To hire a boat, go directly to the port in the historical district.

The main reason to go is the marlin fishing, though. Marlin season officially runs from October to March. The water is choppy off the plateau, where there are three shelves, but the upside is that the swell brings schools of fish. Blue marlins are the belles of the ball, but whites and sailfish hunt here in numbers too. Most of the blues are in the 400- to 500-pound range, but some surpass 700 or even 1,000 pounds!

Artmarina is the main fishing charter here, with two boats at Avenida Coronel Celso Augusto, 35, artmarina@maxnet.com, ☎ 73-3284-1262. They claim to bring up 20 billfish per day. Their US office at 1390 South Dixie Highway, Suite 2221, Miami, Florida, can arrange your entire trip. Contact them at ☎ 305-663-3553, artmarina@maxnet.com.

Pousada Taba Praia Hotel ($), on Atalaia at Avenida Beira Mar, arranges city tours, boat trips and trips to the mangroves, as well as lodging. (☎ 73-3284-1002). For eats, **Tia Jahel** ($), on Praça de Bandeira, 145, serves crab. (☎ 73-3284-1138).

Abrolhos National Marine Park

- Dive the largest coral reef of South America
- Watch whales at the local breeding waters
- Charter a yacht for a tropical cruise

Abrolhos National Marine Park is at the southernmost tip of Bahia. Settlement in the region dates back to 1503 when Portuguese caravels sailed here with Américo Vespucci. Terrified of wrecking their ships on the coral reefs around the five islands of the archipelago, they called the region "Abre os Olhos," meaning "keep your eyes open." This is still good advice for enjoying the beauty of the region.

The average temperature is milder than the rest of Bahia, averaging about about 73°F/23°C.

This warm South Atlantic sea-park has a rich diversity of wildlife that fascinated Charles Darwin when he was here in 1832, especially the humpback whales. Volcanic eruptions formed the island chain millions of years ago, and this is thought to have lifted native corals from very deep shelves dating back 16,000 years. As a result, the corals are on the scale of the Red Sea in terms of size and variety, and the region is best known for scuba diving

If you are not a diver, another reason to go is for whale watching. From August to November, the humpback whales migrate up the coast to Abrolhos from the Antarctic to mate, give birth and nurse their young, surfacing with jumps and the characteristic splash of their tail fins, which makes for an incredible sight.

The islands of the archipelago are also sanctuaries for rare marine birds. Visitors are not allowed to stay on the islands, and land-trips are strictly limited by local authorities, but you can charter romantic yacht or catamaran adventures from the coastal city of **Caravelas** to anchor off the archipelago for a few days.

There are five islands in the archipelago, but only one is inhabited.

Ilha Redonda

To the east is the **Abrolhos reef**. The biggest island, and the only inhabited one, **Santa Barbara**, is not technically part of the park as the Navy administers it. There is a 19th-century lighthouse on one rocky promontory and a few Navy buildings. Off the northeast coast of Santa Barbara is Guarita, a tiny island painted white by bird guano. To the southwest is **Ilha Redonda**, the tallest island in the archipelago, with steep cliffs over the ocean. South of Redonda is **Siriba**, where you are allowed to disembark for only 25 minutes and can hike a trail around the island to see the birds and turtles living among the volcanic rock formations. Finally, to the southeast, there is **Ilha Sueste**, which is a sanctuary for birds, with their scraggly nests made of seaweed. If you are lucky, you might see the sea turtles laying their eggs on the sand of the islands.

How to Get Here

The park is about 32 nautical miles offshore. To get there you need to take a boat, which is easiest from the city of Caravelas. By plane you can get to Caravelas on a regional carrier from the major cities. The airport is on Highway BR 418, at the 14 Km marker (☎ 73-3297-1183). You can drive from Salvador, which is 517 miles/ 862 km to the north or even from Rio de Janeiro, 596 milrd/993 km to the south. Driving from Salvador, take BR 101 south to Texeira de Freitas, then continue on Highway BA-290 east, then south on BA-001 to Caravelas.

It is probably simpler for most travelers to take a bus from Salvador or Rio de Janeiro to Teixeira de Freitas. From there, the **Expresso Brasileiro** bus line makes the two-hour trip from Teixeira de Freitas to Caravelas, passing though Alcobaça, which costs a few dollars. The Caravelas bus station is at Praça Teófilo Otoni (☎ 73-3297-1151).

On a motorboat, the trip to the park takes an hour or two, while on schooners or sailboats it takes up to six hours (these stay out for at least two days).

If you opt to stay in Alcobaça, a town near Caravelas, the bus station is at Avenida Sete de Setembro, 567 (☎ 73-3293-2010), and there is a Tourism Secretariat at Praça São Bernardo, 130 (☎ 73-3293-2010). From there you can also make arrangements to visit the park, but there are fewer options.

Tips for Visiting the Park

Three days is about right to visit Abrolhos. Caravelas has basic lodging options, though you should make reservations in advance, especially during the Carnival holidays in February or March, which is the busiest time (and when prices jump at least 20%). The same is true during the summer months of December through February, especially on weekends and holidays. There is a small fee to visit the park, which is usually included in the price.

Overnights on the islands are prohibited, so you will either have to return to shore at night, or spend a few days on a sailboat anchored at the park (the latter is recommended). If you opt to stay on shore there are motorboats that make the trip to the park in about two hours, leaving at 7 am and returning at 5 pm. Sailboats and catamarans can take around six hours. Note that, if the weather turns bad, your captain might decide to cut the trip short and head back to the continent.

The live-aboard trips generally follow the same three- or four-day schedule. You wake up to see the sunrise over the ocean, then have a light breakfast. Around mid-morning is the first dive of the day. Later you can take a swim around the boat or snorkel, catch some rays, have lunch, or take a nap before the second dive in the afternoon.

At sunset, people gather on deck to socialize. Most operators offer a night dive, followed by dinner and usually a little guitar music. The Ibama park rangers who live here like to hang out on the boats in the evening, and they usually talk about the whales and other wildlife.

The only reason to go is the marine park, but on the continent if you have time to kill there are some good beaches about a half-hour north of the town by bus or car.

For More Information

The park headquarters is in Caravelas at Kitongo beach (☎ 73-3297-1111). There is a Banco do Brasil branch in Caravelas, at Praça Dr Imbassahi. The **Tourism Secretariat** has basic info at Rua Barão do Rio Branco, 65 (☎ 73-3297-1113). There is additional info at www.abrolhos.com.br.

Travel Services

There are at least two dozen licensed boat operators in Caravelas. These range from upscale catamarans to romantic schooners, with either bunks in a common sleeping area or private cabins. For diving and whale watching, try **Abrolhos Turismo**, at Praça Dr. Imbassahi, 8 (www.abrolhosturismo.com.br, ☎ 73-3297-1149 or 73-3297-1332).

Princesa dos Abrolhos has a schooner (www.abrolhosdive.com.br, ☎ 73-3297-1777). **Catamarã Horizonte Aberto** has an upscale catamaran, at Rua das Palmeiras 313 (horizonteaberto@yahoo.com.br, ☎ 73-3297-1474 or 73-3674-1082).

Canto do Atobá Turismo is at Rua das Palmeiras (☎ 73-2297-1711).

Sightseeing

Amerigo Vespucci founded Caravelas in 1503 and there are some Colonial buildings in the historical center. But there is not much to see besides fishermen drinking beer. Spend your time at the park. The **Humpback Whale Institute** (Instituto Baleia Jubarte) in town has information and videos about the whales. Open weekdays from 8 am-6 pm.

Adventures on the Water

Beaches

Coconut-lined **Grauçá** is 4.8 miles/8 km north, with dining and lodging options. **Pontal do Sul** is on the other side of the river.

From the Caravelas bus station take a city-bus to Grauçá beach (in Barra de Caravelas neighborhood) for under a dollar.

Boat Excursions

Besides the marine park itself, you can take a trip to **Cassumba Island**, just south of Caravelas, by boat or canoe, to some mangrove stands. Departures leave from the Ponte Grande, in Nova Viçosa at around 9 am, returning at 5 pm. The trip costs about $20, including lunch. Get info at ☎ 73-3297-1149.

Coroa Vermelha is an island wildlife preserve surrounded by mangroves. At low tide, tide pools form, with sea life, and, walking around the island, you can see turtles and marine birds. It's about 40 minutes of mildly strenuous hiking to get to the pools. There is a coral reef here for snorkeling. Get here by motorboat – check with the travel guides listed above. You should bring water and a snack, as it is a full-day trip.

Barra Velha has a fishing village and coconut groves, with the largest mangrove swamp for nature viewing in southern Bahia. There are white sand beaches with warm water and trails you can hike. The spot near the Catoeiro Lighthouse is a nesting location for white herons. Again, bring water and a snack, as it is a full-day trip.

White heron
(J. Graves)

★★Diving

When visibility is good, few places match Abrolhos for reef diving in South America. The reefs are carefully protected and free from shore run-off, with nearly 100 different types of fish and otherworldly corals. The climate makes it possible to dive without a suit – 73-81°F/23-27°C is typical water temperature and there are practically no currents. The corals are really the most spectacular sight here, apart from the wreck of the *Rosalinda*.

Abrolhos has every coral species known to exist in Brazil, including one that is found only in Bahia – the weird-looking brain coral. There are also colorful fire corals near the Timbebas reef (note that fire corals produce poison to stun plankton for food, and cause a nasty rash in contact with bare skin). Another fascinating variety are the "mushroom" formations that start as deep as about 60 feet down and in some cases grow all the way to the surface, where they spread out to cover a wider area.

There are two blocks of reefs – the **Timbebas Reef** to the northwest of the islands and the **Parcel of Abrolhos**, which surrounds the islands themselves. There is a third reef, not inside the confines of the park, about halfway out to Abrolhos, called **Paredes Reef**. You can dive all of them, but some parts of the archipelago are off-limits.

Depths range from about 10 feet to 120 feet, but almost all the dives are shallow, making Abrolhos good for divers of all levels or even snorkelers. Visibility is best from December to February. Because the sandy sea bed stirs up silt that tends to hang there in zero current, the visibility ranges from so-so to poor. The most you should hope for is 30 to 50 feet but on a spectacular day you might have 90-foot visibility.

Before you dive you will have to listen to a lecture by Ibama park rangers. The rules are simple: no knives or gloves allowed, stay at least three feet from the sea floor and the corals, and take nothing, not even a shell, with you. You are limited to three dives per day.

An added plus to the overnights are night dives. In and around the reefs you can find many varieties of fish – angel fish, princess parrot fish, barracuda and bass, as well as large-headed sea turtles, eels, rays, lobsters, crabs, beautiful gardens of kelp, sponges and anemones and, of course, the humpback whales in season.

As for dive operators, **Paradise Abrolhos** is at Rua das Palmeiras, 313, downtown Caravelas (☎ 73-2397-1433, paradiseabrolhos@uol.com.br). **Atobá Agencia** is at Avenida Oceânica, 65, downtown in Nova Viçosa (☎ 73-3208-1254, atobaagencia@uol.com.br).

★★★Whale Watching

Humpback whales come every year from August through November to mate, give birth and nurse their young until they are plump enough to survive the cold water trek to the Anarctic Circle. Normally, they are seen in small groups. It is not uncommon to view mothers feeding their young, and you will probably get to see the humpback's acrobatic mating dance where they jump out of the water and wave their tail flippers. Despite its size (reaching up to 40 tons!), these are peaceful creatures and they seem to know the park is a safe haven, as some whales return year after year.

Breaching humpback whale
(www.baleiajubarte.com.br)

Where to Stay

Hotel Marina Porto Abrolhos ($$) is one of the better hotels in Caravelas, on the Praia de Graçá, in the midst of a coconut grove and facing the beach. Park visits can be scheduled and transfer services available. Rua da Baleia, 333, in Barra de Caravelas (☎ 73-3674-1059 or 73-3674-1082, www.marinaportoabrolhos.com.br).

Pousada e Spa da Ilha ($$) is on Ilha da Cassumba, in the forest close to the river and beach, a five-minute boat ride from Caravelas (transport provided when you call). There are only two rooms. There is a vegetarian restaurant, bar and massage available (☎ 73-3297-2218).

The **Farol Abrolhos Yacht Club** ($$) runs a hotel on the Rio Caravelas (at Quitongo beach). There are simple chalets and docks with two private cabin cruisers for fast trips out to the park (www.farolabrolhos.com.br).

On the cheap end, try **Pousada Shangri-la** ($), downtown at Rua Barão de Rio Branco, 219 (☎ 73-3297-1059).

Where to Eat

For vegetarian, try the restaurant at **Spa da Ilha** ($$$) in the forest on Ilha da Cassumba, a five-minute boat ride from Caravelas. It's open from 12 am-6 pm (☎ 73-3297-2218). Everybody seems to end up at **Carenagem** ($$), on Rua das Palmeiras, 210 (☎ 73-3297-1280). For seafood you can also try **Encontro dos Amigos** ($$), on Rua das Palmeiras, 370 (☎ 73-3297-1600).

The Central Northeast

Pernambuco

Pernambuco means "where the sea smashes against the rocks" in Tupi-Guarani. Aside from its rocky, reef-lined coast, Pernambuco has plenty of sunshine and an intense cultural scene. Rich with history and natural beauty, one of the most recommended destinations in Brazil is the island jewel of **Fernando de Noronha**. The twin cities **Recife** and **Olinda** also have plenty to offer. There are also some destinations toward the desert to the west which are just starting to develop. Pernambuco is a top destination during Carnival, but it gets packed and you have to make reservations far in advance. It is hot year-round here, ranging from about 75-86°F/24-30°C, with a rainy season in June and July (when prices drop a bit). The recommended time to go is from September to April.

Fernando de Noronha

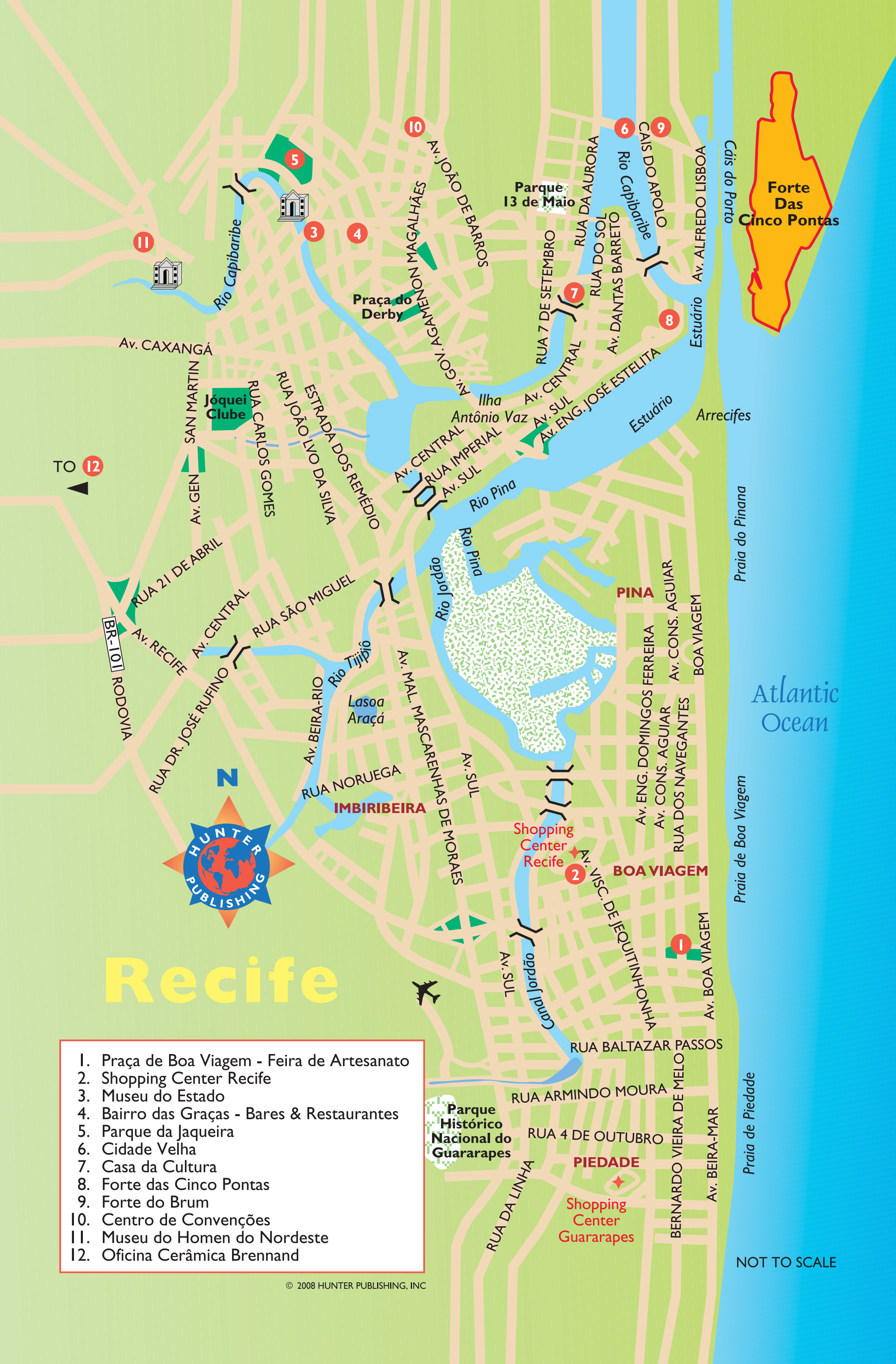
Recife & Olinda

- Stroll historic Recife Antigo and Olinda
- Enjoy some of the finest restaurants in the region
- Experience sights and sounds that inspire Brazilian culture

Recife's Boa Viagem neighborhood
(A. Patrick)

Recife is the second-largest city in the Northeast after Salvador, with a population nearly four million. There is plenty of culture and nightlife, plus excellent scuba diving and sunbathing on the beaches. The Dutch founded a colony here in the mid-1600s after raiding the century-old Portuguese colony at Olinda about 4.2 miles/seven km away. They drained the mangrove swamps to reclaim the city from the ocean and set up sugar plantations (still a major industry in Pernambuco today). **Recife** is grubby, chaotic, and far from beautiful but, if you forgive its confusing streets and urban hazards, it is an interesting place to visit. It claims to be the most cosmopolitan city in the Northeast (though Salvador or Natal might disagree). You may want to spend a day or two here on your way to Fernando de Noronha.

An incredible variety of traditional musical styles originated in this region, and the exotic cultural festivals include one of best **Carnivals** in the country. If you enjoy fine dining, Recife has some of the best restaurants in the Northeast, with local delicacies like the giant guaiamum crab. The scenic historic part of town is dwarfed by skyscrapers, but here and there are Colonial forts, churches and the oldest synagogue in Latin America. One cool thing in Recife is the **Francisco Brennand Ceramics Workshop**, a truly surreal place. For a variety of culture, **Olinda** is the better place to go and a gem of Colonial architecture. This colorful city of seven hills is considered a World Cultural Heritage Site by UNESCO and is a great place to hang out for a day amid the multiple patios with palm trees and gardens, brightly colored buildings, churches and cobbled streets. If you prefer to spend your day at the beach, though, Recife is your only option, as Olinda's beaches are polluted.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RUA DR. JOSÉ RUFINO
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Av. MAL. MASCARENHAS DE MORAES
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1. Praça de Boa Viagem - Feira de Artesanato
2. Shopping Center Recife
3. Museu do Estado
4. Bairro das Graças - Bares & Restaurantes
5. Parque da Jaqueira
6. Cidade Velha
7. Casa da Cultura
8. Forte das Cinco Pontas
9. Forte do Brum
10. Centro de Convenções
11. Museu do Homen do Nordeste
12. Oficina Cerâmica Brennand

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How to Get Here

Recife has a modern international airport in Brazil – Guararapes. Once run-down, with a seedy prostitution scene in the lobby, it has been totally reformed. By car, take PE 060 along the coast from Alagoas state in the south, or BR 101 inland from Paraíba state in the north. BR 060 is scenic, but is crowded and has dangerous curves. Be extra careful, especially at night. Inland to and from the Sertão, you will need to take BR 232. The long-distance bus station is about 12 miles/20 km from the city and is connected by commuter train. If you are heading to Olinda from Recife, it is easiest by taxi, but the adventurous might take a bus. Be alert if you drive from Recife to Olinda, as there are sections of town known for carjacking.

Getting Around

The two recommended neighborhoods in Recife are **Boa Viagem** and old town **Recife Antigo**. Taxis are recommended for transport here. Recife to Olinda should cost $10-20. The city sprawls over three islands, three rivers and is linked by bridges and canals at dozens of points. The buses are confusing and the mediocre urban train system is not recommended, except for going to the bus station in Recife.

If you insist on a bus, opt only for the safer ônibus especiais (special buses) that run along the beach and cost a few dollars. From the airport, always use a metered taxi comum (common taxi) at the stand in front. The special airport cabs are a rip off. Recife taxi drivers are famous for giving you free lodging advice – which you can safely ignore as they get commissions under the table. Driving in town is discouraged unless you are taking a road trip outside the city: the streets are very confusing and can be dangerous.

For More Information

There are Tourist Information Centers operated by **Empetur**, one of the best tour boards in Brazil. There are posts at the Guararapes Airport, which is open 24 hours (☎ 31-3462-4960), at the Casa da Cultura on Rua Floriano Peixoto in the Sao Jose neighborhood (☎ 31-3224-2361), open daily from 9 am-7 pm, closing Sunday at 3 pm, and in the Old Recife neighborhood on Rua da Guia (☎ 31-3224-2361), open daily 9 am-9 pm. You can find some good basic information in English and photos at www.recifeguide.com.

Safety Tips

In general you need to take special precautions in this large city, but resorts and better hotels have excellent security. Tourists do not tend to be specifically targeted, but pickpocketing or snatch-and-run theft is common. Crime here has included armed robbery against tourists.

Pedestrians or drivers can be targets, so ask your cab driver to close the windows.

Boa Viagem has a lot of police out until 10 pm and you can go safely on foot. After that, use cabs to get around. Recife's tourist police are fairly helpful and some speak English. There is a tourist police station at the airport if you need to report an incident.

In Olinda, generally the tourist zones in the historic district are well policed but you should watch your things. The hoard of local guides in Olinda is a nuisance, but unavoidable.

Recife has man-eating sharks. At the time of writing, there had been no reported attacks inside the reef for about six months, but outside the reef attacks are known to happen every week. Attacks are most common near the Air Force Hospital (Hospital de Aeronautica) and Suapi, where there is a passageway to the open sea.

Festivals & Events

Carnival

Carnival in Recife and Olinda is one of the best in Brazil, rivaling that of Salvador and Rio de Janeiro. There used to be an "out of season" carnival called a micareta in Boa Viagem in October. It was a lot of fun but it has been shut down.

In Recife there are a lot of Carnival street party groups called blocos spread out through the city with *trios eletricos* (see Salvador, Bahi for an explanation of the *trios*) and a boiling, anything-goes atmosphere. Guararapes is one of the most popular of these street parties, as is the largest, Galo da Madrugada, which draws over a million people. One of the interesting things about Carnival here is that the music is heavily influenced by local sounds such as frevo, maracatú and cabloquinho. In Olinda there is a famous Carnival with exotic and fun costumes and giant dolls over 10 feet tall. Dozens of Carnival parades and hundreds of parties hit the streets, starting off with the famous Homem da Meia-Noite ("midnight man") parade, which has been around for over 70 years. Close to a million people take part every year.

It is advised to get in touch with Empetur or ask at your hotel for the latest schedules. Plan ahead because it gets crowded and difficult to find lodging.

Sightseeing in Recife

Boa Viagem beach
(C. Brabrand)

Recife has intriguing street life at night from Thursdays to Sundays at Boa Viagem and the old town district. Up to about 10 pm, you can safely stroll through **Boa Viagem** along the gorgeous beaches. Have a bite to eat at the nice restaurants, visit the upscale shops, and stop at the little square (praçinha) where there is an open-air arts and crafts fair, daredevil shows and rounds of the Afro-Brazilian fighting dance, capoeira, which here uses aggressive Angolan-style combat moves with the traditional music and rhythm. Nearby are several rows of food stalls selling snacks and drinks, which is a fun and cheap option.

The old town district dating from 1732, called **Recife Antigo**, is filled with historic buildings, arts and crafts merchants, food stands, and is entertaining to explore. Getting there and back is best done by taxi. There are a lot of bars and restaurants here that offer live music such as samba, Brazilian pop, forró and other local rhythms. During the day you might consider a city tour, offered by the better hotels at reasonable prices, or by enterprising taxi drivers who charge a bit more but offer more personalized service. The colorful old row houses, museums, Baroque churches, and monuments are also worth a look.

At the time of writing Recife Antigo was being renovated and should continue to get even better. The city is serious about improving its image and is changing for the better.

Historic Churches

★The **Golden Chapel** (Capela Dourada) is the most interesting of about a half-dozen historic churches in Recife. Construction began in the 17th century and was completed in the 18th century. The Baroque-style church has a gilded cedar altar. The adjacent **Franciscan Convent** from 1606 has panels of traditional Portuguese ceramic tiles. There is also a sacred art museum here. Tourists are charged under a dollar to visit the whole complex. At Rua do Imperador in Santo Antônio. Open from Monday through Friday from 8-11:30 am and 2-5 pm, on Saturdays from 8-11:30 am (☎ 81-3224-0530).

The **Jewish Cultural Center and Hahal Zur Israel Sinagogue** (Sinagoga Kahal Zur Israel) was the first synagogue in Latin America, with original architecture from the 17th century. Located in Recife Antigo at

SINAGOGA KAHAL ZUR ISRAEL

First synagogue in Latin America

(R.A. Frantz)

Rua do Bom Jesus, 197. Entrance costs under a dollar. Open 9 am-5 pm Tuesday through Friday, and on weekends from 3-7 pm (☎ 81-3224-2128).

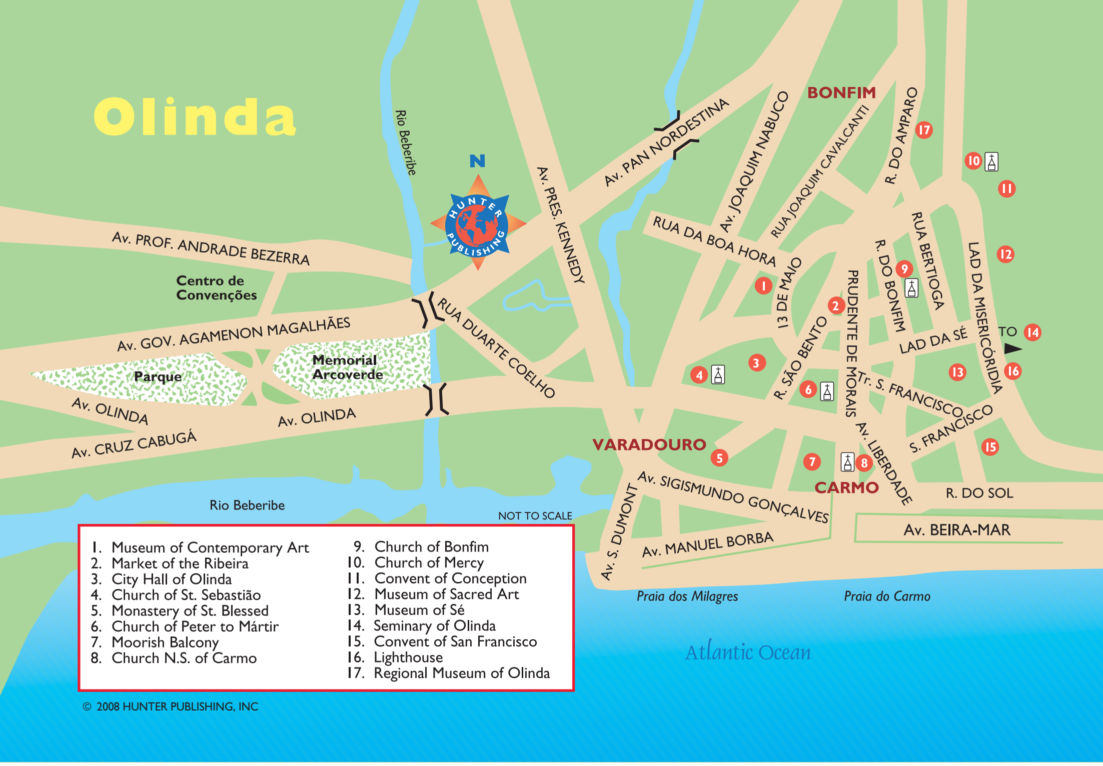
Historic Fortresses

The **Five Pointed Fortress** (Forte das Cinco Pontas) was built in 1630 by the Dutch. The Portuguese overran it in 1677 and rebuilt with only four points. At the Praça das Cinco Pontas in São José, it opens Tuesday through Friday from 9 am-6 pm and on weekends from 1-5 pm (☎ 81-3224-2850). The **Brum Fortress** (Forte de Brum) is a Dutch fort from 1630 with a military museum. at Praça Comunidade Luso-Brasileira (in Recife Antigo). Entrance fee is under a dollar. Open weekdays from 9 am-4 pm (☎ 81-3224-4620).

Cultural Adventures

Ricardo Brennand Institute

The ★★★**Francisco Brennand Ceramic Workshop** (Oficina de Cerâmica Francisco Brennand) is a worthwhile stop, with a huge area for displays of Brennand's work and strange monuments with surreal and erotic themes. Take a taxi to Avenida Caxangá in Várzea. Open weekdays from 8 am-5 pm and weekends from 1-4 pm. Entrance costs a few dollars (☎ 81-3271-2466). The similarly-named ★**Ricardo Brennand Insitute** (Instituto Ricardo Brennand) is more somber, with rotating exhibits and a permanent display on the Dutch and Portuguese wars in Pernambuco, as well as a vault of archaic weaponry. In Várzea, at Av. Antônio Brennand. Closed Mondays, but open 10 am-5 pm all other days (☎ 81-3271-1544).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Av. GOV. AGAMENON MAGALHÃES
Parque
Memorial Arcoverde
Av. OLINDA
Av. CRUZ CABUGÁ
Av. OLINDA
RUA DUARTE COELHO
Av. PRES. KENNEDY
Av. PAN NORDESTINA
Av. JOAQUIM NABUCO
RUA JOAQUIM CAVALCANTI
BONFIM
R. DO AMPARO
RUA DA BOA HORA
13 DE MAIO
R. SÃO BENTO
PRUDENTE DE MORAIS
R. DO BONFIM
RUA BERTIOGA
LAD DA SÉ
LAD DA MISERICÓRDIA
TO 14
Tr. S. FRANCISCO
S. FRANCISCO
Av. LIBERDADE
VARADOURO
CARMO
Av. SIGISMUNDO GONÇALVES
Av. S. DUMONT
Av. MANUEL BORBA
R. DO SOL
Av. BEIRA-MAR
Praia dos Milagres
Praia do Carmo
Atlantic Ocean
NOT TO SCALE
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1. Museum of Contemporary Art
2. Market of the Ribeira
3. City Hall of Olinda
4. Church of St. Sebastião
5. Monastery of St. Blessed
6. Church of Peter to Mártir
7. Moorish Balcony
8. Church N.S. of Carmo
9. Church of Bonfim
10. Church of Mercy
11. Convent of Conception
12. Museum of Sacred Art
13. Museum of Sé
14. Seminary of Olinda
15. Convent of San Francisco
16. Lighthouse
17. Regional Museum of Olinda

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Sightseeing in Olinda

Olinda is one of the most picturesque cities of Brazil, with architecture from the 16th and 17th centuries and a rich cultural life. This is an upscale, artsy suburb of Recife, with a "bohemian" lifestyle and a visibly gay crowd. UNESCO has given it Patrimony of Humanity status. One of the most recommended stops is **Rua do Amparo**, a Colonial street with restaurants, museums, arts and crafts shops, artists' studios and guesthouses. You will spend most of your time here on foot, so wear comfortable shoes.

It takes about a half-day to see the historic district with its Colonial buildings, churches and ornate chapels. Stop at the **Casa de Bonecas Gigantes** (House of Giant Dolls) at number 45, where you can see the famous Carnival party effigies. A bit farther is the **Mamulengo Museum** (☎ 81-3439-3494) at number 59 with exhibits on folk theater. Drop by the bar way at the end, at number 212, called **Bodega de Veio**, to refresh yourself amid a lively crowd.

You may be approached at every step by local guides. There are two kinds of official guides – the registered independent tour guides from the **Associaçãõ de Guias Turisticas Independentes** (AGTIO) or the **Guia-Mirim** guides. The latter are often kids or teenagers living in a street situation who work as tour guides as part of a social project (they do little more than show you where things are, but you are helping to stop crime). Both types carry IDs and you should verify they have one before hiring anyone.

Most of the shops, bars, and restaurants in the historic district cater to tourists and the prices are jacked up, but you don't need to spend much money to enjoy the sights. Sample a strange-tasting local drink on the street called Pau-de-Indio, made with cachaça, honey and dozens of herbs. It is said to be an aphrodisiac. Also drop by **Rua Treze de Maio**, which leads to the **Praça de São Pedro**, where there is a red mansion built during the Dutch invasion, as well as a Moorish building on the plaza with a restaurant, and plenty of arts and crafts shops to browse.

Historic Churches

Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Graça
(R.A. Frantz)

With nearly 500 years of history, Olinda has plenty of historic churches. Here are the principal ones. Note: Visitation hours change from time to time, but most were from 8 am-5 pm (closed during the noon-2 pm lunch hour). **Igreja de Nossa Senhora do Carmo** is the oldest Carmelite church in Brazil, at the Praça do Carmo square. This is typically where guides begin their tours. It fell into disrepair when the Dutch kicked out the Portuguese, but was rebuilt in the 1700s. **Convento de Sao Francisco**, dating from 1585, is the oldest Franciscan structure in Brazil, with a cross built of rocks taken from the reef. The religious buildings are on Rua de São Francisco, 280.

★**Igreja de Nossa Senhora da Graça**, on Rua Bispo Coutinho not far from Alto da Sé, dates from 1549 and has a seminary next door with a great view of the city. **Igreja da Sé** cathedral dates from 1537 with an interesting interior and a stunning view of the city from the top of Alto da Sé hill, where the arriving colonists gave Olinda its flattering name. Stop for a tapioca snack sold at street stalls in front of the church.

Repentistas: Wandering Poets of the Northeast

One of the best examples of Brazilian creativity is the tradition of the *repentistas*. These wandering poet-minstrels chant improvised and humorous verses, accompanied by guitar (or the smaller "country" version called a viola). Working the crowds all over the Northeast, repentistas sing for hours, sometimes poking fun at people in the crowd or flattering people who give tips. Sometimes going solo, it is just as common to hear them engage in duels for hours (there are stories of this going on for days) where they will fire off clever and profane verses trying to outwit the other with their rhymes to the delight of their audience. There is usually some sharp social or political commentary as well.

Unless you speak colloquial Portuguese you won't understand their lyrics, but it's fun to listen to them for a bit anyway. If they approach your table, or you listen for a while, you are expected to peel out a few bills. If you don't, they will likely dish out an obscene rhyme about you that you may not understand but the crowd surely will! One of the best places to find repentistas is in Olinda around the crowded areas at night. But you can also find them all through the Northeast, even in remote towns of the Sertão, or at the Northeastern Fair in Rio de Janeiro. Repentistas should not be confused with the wandering musicians who fill the streets with the sounds of serenades at night in Olinda.

Adventures on the Water

Beaches

In Recife the recommended beach is at **Boa Viagem**, the most upscale and close to the better hotels. While pretty, the beaches in Olinda are polluted. Due to the presence of sharks, surfing has been prohibited in Recife, but people seem to take their chances anyway.

Diving

There is better diving at the island paradise of **Fernando de Noronha**, but the coastline of **Pernambuco** has interesting wrecks and sea-life. Visibility is pretty good, at 65-130 feet on average. The water is warm too, at about 80-82˚F/26-28°C. There are 110 shipwrecks along the reef-filled coastline with over a dozen you can dive. You can expect to see turtles, rays, eels, enormous jewfish, even manatees, and a wide variety of fish and coral, including sharks. The advanced dives are the best here. A typical two-tank dive costs about $40, more for nighttime and technical dives.

Atlantic Diving is PADI-certified operator. Contact them via atlantic@matrix.com.br, www.atlanticdiving.pro.br, or ☎ 81-3469-3985. **Seagate** has two boats, including safety equipment, radio, depth finder and GPS, with NAUI- and PDIC-certified instructors and dive masters. They are in Olinda at Avenida Min. Marcos Freire, 257, in the Bairro Novo neighborhood (☎ 81-3462-1657 or 81-9972-9662, seagate@seagaterecife.com.br, www.seagaterecife.com.br).

Casa de Campo Historic Plantation

For peace, quiet and incredibly robust plantation food, the Casa do Campo is the right destination. The owners Bartolomeu and Lucia are an eccentric and friendly couple, who truly love the region and its charms. In Itambe, an hour or two from Recife along a scenic road (though not quite into the arid Sertao wastelands), the comfortable but simple lodgings are perfect for families or couples who want to see a bit of the interior of the state. The sugar plantation and cattle ranch provide an endless variety of delicious meals, with virtually all the ingredients produced locally – fresh cheeses, savory stewed goat, and wonderful homemade desserts. Here there is a saying – the food is so good and abundant that even a sword can get fat! Stroll around the vast plantation and see some local wildlife, such as turtles, armadillos and ducks in a beautiful and serene location.

The rooms of the old plantation house are air-conditioned, with electric showers. Horseback riding, soccer, volleyball, or sleeping off your meals in shaded hammocks are good options. Nearby there are great and seldom-visited historic destinations for cultural side-trips and interesting photo-ops. One is the pet guaiamum crab at a rustic bar called Buraco da Gia in Goiania that will hold your glass for you. Very highly recommended for a day or two of fresh air and good food, away from it all. Call ahead for transportation arrangements. www.casadecampotur.com.br, ☎ 81-3476-1385 or 81-9972-9292 (Bartolomeu), or 81-9913-8820 (Lucia).

What to Buy

Opal

In Recife you can get a good deal on colorful ceramics, macramé, wood carvings, leather (hats, boots, cups, décor, you name it), hammocks and blankets. A lot of it is junk, but you can find cool stuff. Haggle! There is some interesting typical local jewelry, with a colorful mix of stones, such as opals mined in the region. There are a lot of artists and some interesting works at the arts fair from Thursday to Sunday at the pracinha in Boa Viagem in Recife. One of them is **Raquel Carnib** (her studio is in Olinda), who can be reached at r.carnib@bol.com.br or ☎ 81-3431-2401. A great place to shop for arts and crafts in Recife is the **Casa da Cultura de Pernambuco** at Rua Floriano Peixoto (Santo Antônio), which was a prison dating from 1855 that has been converted to an arts center. Wander around the cells in four wings and two stories and you will find virtually the same products all over but in different combinations. Sip a coconut outside in the little plaza (where there are occasional shows) or have lunch at **Leite** (see *Where to Eat*). Open from 9 am-6 pm daily and Sunday from 10 am-5 pm. ☎ 81-3224-2850. Finally, in Old Recife on Sundays, you can stop by **Rua do Bom Jesus**, where traffic is blocked and tents set up with a variety of weird and wonderful things to look at and buy. Nearby, there are restaurants. In Olinda, visit the **Mercado da Ribeira** on Rua Bernardo Viera de Melo, open on weekends from 9 am-6 pm, and filled with arts and crafts shops with similar goods. At the **Alto da Sé** (see *Historic Churches*) there are artisans who sell their wares in the plaza. Olinda has a lot of arts and crafts, ceramics, textiles and paintings for sale.

Casa da Cultura

Where to Eat

Recife

Recife calls to mind New Orleans for its variety of dining and nightlife options. Here you can find everything from sophisticated international cuisine to more traditional coastal fare, or hearty northeastern food like sun-beef (carne de sol), or goat (bode), which is leaner than beef and can be tasty. Another local favorite is *camarão na moranga*, or jumbo shrimp cooked in a gourd. Try the excellent local cachaças for which Pernambuco is famous.

The ★**Bargaço** ($$) is a traditional favorite in Recife serving Bahian and other northeastern food with an emphasis on seafood. American Express, Diners and MasterCard accepted. Open Sunday through Thursday from noon to midnight and to 1 am on Friday and Saturday. In Boa Viagem at Avenida Boa Viagem, 670. (☎ 81-3465-1847).

Boi Preto Grill ($$$) is an upscale steakhouse in Pina, on Avenida Boa Viagem, 97, with a wine cellar of note. All credit cards accepted. Open every day for lunch and dinner. (☎ 81-3466-6334).

★**Leite** ($$$) is recommended for contemporary cuisine with a Portuguese accent. The restaurant is a historic landmark just few yards from the Casa de Cultura downtown, at Praça Joaquim Nabuco 147, in Santo Antônio. All credit cards accepted. (☎ 81-3224-7977).

Famiglia Giuliano ($$) on Avenida Domingos Ferreira in Boa Viagem is a medieval styled Italian restaurant with a sushi bar on the first floor, considered one of the best restaurants in Recife. All credit cards accepted. Opens every day for lunch and dinner (☎ 81-3465-9922).

Famiglia Giuliano

Guaiamum Gigante ($) is a famous, informal crab shack. The guaiamums, as crabs are called here, are cheap and delicious, with good service and a fun crowd. It is in Parnamirim, on Rua Doutor José de Góes, 299. Open Tuesday through Friday for dinner, Saturday for lunch and dinner and Sunday for lunch. Accepts credit cards. (☎ 81-3441-1509).

For Japanese food, try the upscale **Kojima** ($$$), especially on Tuesday, which seems to be the most popular night. At Rua Ondina, 141, in Pina. Open from 7 pm till late every day but Sunday. MasterCard accepted. (☎ 81-3328-3585).

★**Parraxaxá** ($$) is recommended for a typical Northeastern feast. Try the carne de sol, and exotic desserts like cachaça ice cream. In Boa Viagem at Rua Baltazar Pereira, 32. Open for lunch and dinner Monday through Friday and for breakfast as well on the weekends. Credit cards accepted. (☎ 81-3463-7874).

Olinda

Kwetu ($$$) is a stylish garden restaurant with an emphasis on Middle Eastern, Mediterranean, Indian, and Thai cuisine. On Praia do Jacare beach, at Avenida Manoel Borba, 338. All credit cards accepted. Open every day but Tuesday, from 6 to 11 pm, with lunch Wednesday through Sunday. (☎ 81-3439-8867).

Goya ($$) is a good alternative for Pernambuco regional cuisine, like *carne de sol*. In Amparo, on Rua do Amparo, 157. All credit cards accepted. Open Wednesday through Monday for lunch and dinner. (☎ 81-3439-4875).

Oficina de Sabor ($$$) is one of the most famous restaurants in Olinda, with seafood and local specialties. Rua do Amparo, 335. (☎ 81-3429-3331).

Where to Stay

High season is from January to February especially at Carnival, when it can be hard to get a room. Local tourism operations can help book a room if there is a problem. Avoid the neighborhoods of Boa Vista and Santo Antonio where most of the "hotels" are hourly places. Youth hostels are a poor choice here too. Olinda is more charming, but Recife (espcially Boa Viagem) is more modern and has the beaches.

Recife

Atlante Plaza ($$$$) is the best hotel in Recife, with good service and clean, comfortable rooms near the nightlife and restaurants of Boa Viagem and facing the beach. There is a pool, sauna, and fitness center. Avenida Boa Viagem, 5426. (☎ 81-3464-2500, www.atlanteplaza.com.br).

The **Recife Palace** ($$$) is one of the best in town and tends to be the least expensive of the top-tier hotels. It is on Avenida Boa Viagem. (☎ 81-4009-2500).

For economy in a safe, decent environment the best option is **Marante Plaza** ($$), at Avenida Boa Viagem, 1070. (☎ 81-3465-1070, www.marante.com.br).

The **Park Othon** ($) is a good option for economy without hitting rock bottom, and it's still close to the beach in Boa Viagem. Rua dos Navegantes, 9. (☎ 81-3465-4666).

The Recife Palace

Olinda

Pousada do Amparo ($$$) is a charming 18th-century guesthouse, with pool and a very nice view. Rua do Amparo, 199. (☎ 81-3439-1749).

Sete Colinas ($$) is in a tropical park, with a pool, sauna and Colonial-style mansion house. It is on the Ladeira de São Francisco, 199. (☎ 81-3439-9722).

Pousada Quatro Cantos ($$) is a charming 19th-century guesthouse with a pool. Many works of

Pousada Quatro Cantos

art and even furniture are for sale. On Prudente de Morais, 441. (☎ 81-3429-0220).

Resorts

Cabo de Santo Agostino

A recommended resort along the Southern Coast of Pernambuco is ★★**Blue Tree Park Cabo de Santo Agostino** ($$$$$). It is 22 miles/37 km south of Recife and takes about 45 minutes to get there from the international airport. The resort offers a spectacular setting with beaches and stunning vegetation, with all the comfort of a full-service international resort. The hotel is on a long beach with coconut trees, white sands and clear warm water, and surrounded by mangrove stands and igarapes in a natural labyrinth of canals to explore. There is a full range of leisure options such as sailing, nature walks and scuba diving, as well as shiatsu and reiki for relaxation. Avenida Beira Mar, 750, in Suape, Cabo de Santo Agostinho. (reservas@bluetree.com.br, ☎ 81-3521-6000).

Porto de Galinhas

The **Nannai Muro Alto Beach Resort** ($$$$$) is 32 miles/54 km south of Recife and 4.8 miles/eight km from Porto de Galinhas on a stunning beach called Muro Alto, lined with coconut trees and sand cliffs. The resort keeps things a bit quieter than the crowded beaches of Porto de Galinhas. There is a huge tide pool with sandy sea bed and reefs, plus a restaurant on the sea-front for romantic dining. Porto de Galinhas is one of the liveliest beach towns in Brazil, about 10 minutes from here by dune buggy. You can also float through the mangroves on a traditional sailing sloop called the jangada. Rodovia PE 09, Acesso a Muro Alto, Km 03, in Ipojuca. (reservas@nannai.com.br, ☎ 81-3552-0100).

Fernando de Noronha National Marine Park

- A pristine tropical island with lots to do
- See rotator dolphins and sharks in their natural habitat
- Some of the best diving in the country

If you don't mind its rusticity, Fernando de Noronha is one of the best destinations in the entire country. Vaguely reminiscent of Hawaii, the volcanic chain of 21 islands dates back 12 million years. Just south of the Equator, the climate is tropical.

Some 225 miles/360 km from the coast of Rio Grande do Norte, the island is controlled by Pernambuco state. Sparsely populated and carefully preserved, it was discovered in 1502. The island was named after the Portuguese financier of Amerigo Vespucci's expedition, Fernão de Loronha. But it was virtually abandoned for 200 years after he sailed past.

Dutch and English explorers captured it in the 16th and 17th centuries, later to be pushed out by the French. Finally the Portuguese managed to wrest control from the French and, seeing that the island was vulnerable to attacks, built up the largest system of fortresses in Brazil, about 10 in all. Some still exist today.

Used as a penal colony in the 18th century, the remote island today is still far from a luxury resort. The roads were built by prisoners and by US military who used the archipelago as a base in World War II and by NASA, which operated a satellite tracking station here in the late 1950s. Despite these advancements, Fernando de Noronha has been deliberately kept rustic to preserve its ecology, with only the most basic services available. There are very simple guesthouses, a few paved roads and dirt tracks for dune buggies, and a handful of restaurants and shops in the main town, **Villa dos Remedios**. The number of travelers is deliberately kept low so the region never suffers from overcrowding during holiday periods.

While it is partially forested, not much is left of the original fauna since the trees were cut down to prevent exiles from escaping on rafts. However, Charles Darwin was fascinated by the island's incredible

biodiversity, which includes dozens of marine birds, sharks, sea turtles, rays, eels, and the spectacular rotator dolphins that fly out of the water and turn full circle. Curiously, one of the island's most common creatures, an agile black lizard called a *mabuia*, was introduced to control rats brought by colonists.

Because most of the wildlife is underwater, scuba diving and snorkeling is highly recommended. The water is deliciously warm for enjoying the many beaches, and there is plenty to explore on the island along trails or by boat through the archipelago.

In the evenings, locals and visitors gather at the bars near the beaches for live music and dancing. It is impossible not to say it: Fernando de Noronha is also for lovers. The enchanting sunsets, the endless nuances of the glittering coast and the warm tropical breeze help give this island its fame as an aphrodisiac.

How to Get Here

✈ Most people arrive by plane. The airport is 1.8 miles/three km from town so you will have to take a taxi in, though pousadas will sometimes pick you up by prior arrangement. There are regular flights from Recife, Natal (Rio Grande do Norte) and Fortaleza (Ceara) that take from one to 1½ hours on Varig or Trip airlines. Most people arrive from Recife.

Another way here is by sailboat on a one- to two-day excursion. **Atlantes** (see *Diving in Recife*) offers a 12-day sail charter package with three days in Recife and seven on board, including scuba diving, for about $1,500 per person. Air fare to Recife is additional. (www.atlantes.com.br).

Getting Around

A dune buggy is your best friend on the island, but be sure to bring comfortable sandals as there is a lot of walking. There are also taxis in town, with a stand near the Palacio de São Miguel, and one bus that goes along the highway at rare intervals.

The going rate to rent a buggy is around $50-100 per day, plus gasoline (the filling station is on the highway near the Santo Antonio port). Practically the only problem that visitors constantly complain about are the dune buggy rentals. There are about 50 rental "agencies," but the better ones are in town: **Locadora Novo Tempo** (☎ 81-3619-1671), **Locadora Novo Mundo** (☎ 81-3619-1123), or **Locadora Noronha** (☎ 81-3619-

1490). If you have serious problems, you might file a complaint with the officials at the Palácio de São Miguel but don't expect officials on this sleepy island to do anything about it.

It is common to hitch a ride, so don't be afraid to stick your thumb out if a buggy is too expensive (this is also a great way to meet fellow travelers)! For about half the price of a buggy you can rent a motorcycle, or even cheaper, a bike in the Villa or ask at your pousada.

Tips for Enjoying Fernando de Noronha

To control the number of visitors, you will be charged a special environmental fee per day that goes up the longer you stay. You will be given a slip of paper on arrival that you return when you leave and pay the fee. Recent fees were about $10 per day for the first 10 days, and up from there. There is a price table at the site www.noronha.pe.gov.br.

Plan to spend at least three days to a week here. You'll probably want to stay longer, but the environmental fees start to add up. Because of its location virtually on the Equator, you can visit Fernando de Noronha year-round. There is a rainy season from January to July and a dry season from August to December (this is when visibility is best for diving). The surf is strongest on the western side of the island from November to March.

Ever since the island opened for tourism there has been a tendency toward package tours, but this is changing. You are better off to arrange your own airfare and lodging (though you should make reservations in advance). You have to have reservations at a pousada in order to enter the island, but if you don't like your place, you can pretty easily look around and find another: try the **Vila do Trinta**, about five minutes walk east from the Vila dos Remedios.

The island is run by a socialist system that tries to distribute the tourist money without much regard to which services are best. Keep in mind that there is practically nothing luxurious about the island. Food and lodging tend to be very simple, usually just rented rooms in locals' homes. The island uses solar power (and an experimental wind generator which does not work), so blackouts are constant and you will not necessarily have hot water.

There is only one post office, one hospital, and one bank (ABN Amro), which allows ATM withdrawals, but you should bring local currency. There is one supermarket on the island in Vila da Trinta used by locals, where you can save a little money rather than the shops in town.

Basic necessities are expensive here because everything is shipped in by weight, so it is a good idea to bring with you film, batteries, medicine or whatever else you might need, even though you can buy these things on the island. You should also bring a mask, snorkel and fins, but you can rent them on the island as well. Bring a camera. You might also want binoculars for spotting dolphins or other beautiful wildlife.

Ibama carefully oversees the island's ecology and controls access to tide-pools (where you are not allowed even to use sunscreen, so you might want to bring an extra tee-shirt if you are susceptible to sunburn). Because of the tropical climate, bring light clothing, a hat, shorts, and make sure to drink plenty of fluids. A light backpack or rucksack can be handy for exploring. At night it can get a bit chillier so you might want long sleeves.

Finally, the island itself is very safe but, despite claims by the local authorities that there has never been a problem, locals report that there have been assaults on single women in the past. The individual responsible has been caught, but you should be alert. In general, crime is not a problem at all (if somebody steals something there is nowhere for them to go!) and there is a military police station available for help if needed.

For More Information

The website **www.noronha.com.br** has web-cam images, surf reports and plenty of other information to help you plan your trip. The government site **www.noronha.pe.gov.br** has an English version and photos, with useful listings and phone numbers for all the commercial establishments. You can also get in touch with Empetur in Recife.

Sightseeing

You can visit only the main island, which is 6½ square miles/17 square kms in size, as the others are protected. You don't need to make any special itineraries, unless you plan to go scuba diving or take one of the boat excursions listed here. The best sights are natural ones, but there is a lot of history on the island as well, and you can also learn about the native wildlife at the Ibama visitor center on the main road (Almeida de Boldro).

You might consider an **Ilhatur** when you arrive, which is a guided buggy tour that takes 10 hours and shows you the entire island. It costs about $75 and is a good way to get oriented, but you can also find your way around pretty easily by yourself. Plus, most people prefer to be left alone when they explore here anyway.

Your point of reference is the Vila da Trinta, or simply "Vila," and the island's one highway, BR 363. But, outside the settlement, the beaches are the best indicators of where you are. The side of the island that faces the mainland to the southwest ("mar de dentro") has shallower water and stronger surf than the seaward side ("mar de fora"). The rugged dirt tracks that take you to the beaches on the continental side of the island are a bit confusing, but they make for an exciting buggy ride (be careful not to get stuck when it is very muddy!).

The main sights are in the Villa, along with the offices of dive operators, restaurants, shops and services. The tour board (☎ 81-3619-1378) is at **Palácio São Miguel**, which is the town hall building on a hill in the

Villa, with Colonial cannons and a WWII howitzer in the facing plaza. The palace was built on the ruins of the old prison administration building.

The ★★**N.S. dos Remedios Fortress** was built in 1737 upon the ruins of a Dutch fortress dating from a century before. To get there, walk up the path to the right, facing out toward Cachorro beach at the Palácio São Miguel. While beautiful, the fortress also has a grim past as a political prison (you can still see the tiny cells). There are some incredible views from the battlements.

This **church** is the most important religious building on the island, dating from 1722 and it has been restored. It is next to the Palacio São Miguel.

Morro do Pico

(M. Skaug)

The **Morro do Pico** is a striking, obelisk-shaped rock formation with a 1,000-foot peak that can be seen from virtually the whole island. Climbing is prohibited but there are trails that can take you to the base.

★**Buraco de Raquel**, on the northeastern tip of the island, has an interesting volcanic rock formation tunneled through by sea water, but swimming is prohibited. This is a very scenic outlook from the cliffs over the water.

The best place on the island to spot dolphins is the ★★**Mirante de Golfinos** (or "dolphin point"). If you get there at about 5:30-7:30 am, you can see hundreds of them passing by on their way out to sea. The harbor down below (no visits allowed) is called **Baia dos Golfinos**, which is said to be one of the few places in the world where more than 1,000 dolphins can take shelter from sharks, their natural enemies. The lookout point is to the southwest of Sancho beach on the continental side of the island, reached by a dirt track from the highway.

The ★**Tamar Project** is dedicated to saving the sea turtles. There is a little museum and a park with replicas of the various turtle species, and there are special educational lectures on the local wildlife given by Ibama every evening at 9 pm (the theme changes every day, and is a good option for evening entertainment). You can also stop here for a little while and have an espresso at the snack bar (☎ 81-3619-1171).

Near the port and Buraco de Raquel, there is the **Museu de Tubarão** (shark museum). It's worth no more than five minutes of your time, as you wait for a boat at the port, but you can try the local specialty, *tubalhau*, which are snacks made from dried shark meat.

Adventures in Fernando de Noronha

★★★Beaches

The beaches on the continental side generally have heavier surf. Each has its own charms but there are a few that you should definitely not miss. Some of the beaches can be visited on the boat excursions listed below. Visits are prohibited from 6 pm to 6 am, January to June, because of the sea turtles at Sancho and Leão.

The **Porto de Santo Antonio** has a great beach where you can snorkel over the reefs. Up above the port there are the ruins of the Santo Antonio Fortress, with some walls still poking up through the weeds.

Cachorro is the calm beach right under the vill. It's perfect if you arrive in the afternoon and want to take a swim. Pretty much every night, the bar near the entrance fills up with people for a little forró music and dancing.

Praia do Meio is on the other side of the reef from Cachorro and is a surf beach in the right season.

Conceição is a great beach with natural pools and interesting reefs where you can spot octopi and other creatures. You get there from Boldro beach.

The sunset at **Boldró** is considered one of the high points of the island. The beach has high surf during parts of the year, and from the cliffs up above (2.8 miles/4½ km from the villa) there is a panoramic view over the ocean where people gather to watch the sun go down.

Americano, with its soft yellow sand, was a favorite of the US troops here in WWII. There is a little pool off toward the left, facing the ocean. Get there on foot from Bode, or during low tide from Boldró.

Bode ("goat") beach has access to Quixaba in low tide, which is small and actually just an extension of Bode, but disappears during high tide.

Facing the **Dois Irmaos** ("Two Brothers") volcanic rock formations, which are identical lump-shaped rocks about 350 feet high, is **Cacimba do Padre beach**, the only one on the island with a fresh-water spring. You can snorkel around, but be careful with the surf.

Connected by a trail is ★**Baia dos Porcos**, which means "Bay of Pigs." There are natural pools here, but swimming is prohibited. At low tide you can walk from Sancho or over the rocks, but be careful.

Sancho is probably the most beautiful beach. On the southwest side of Porcos, the white sand beach is accessed by a metal ladder that descends into a narrow crack in the rock that makes for an exciting adventure itself. Or you can get there by boat. The calm, clear bay is wonderful for snorkeling, with plenty of rays and other fish to see (especially in the rocky areas on either side of the beach). Up above, a short walk from the ladder, there are a couple of shacks where you can order a drink or a snack.

Leão ("lion"), also on the southeastern portion of the seaward side, is a large and generally deserted beach where you can spot sea turtles. There are natural pools on either side. Not to be confused with the Rugido de Leão on the other side of the island, Leão beach takes its name from a rock formation that must have looked like a lion to somebody. You be the judge.

Ponta de Caracas is a lookout point only. Swimming is prohibited.

Baia de Sueste is one of the few beaches with paved access. It's worth a look and there are the ruins of the São Joaquim de Sueste fortress nearby. There is also a rare mangrove stand.

Atalaia, on the seaward side of the island, has absolutely crystalline water. There is a natural pool for snorkeling, considered one of the best attractions on the island. You can only go in during scheduled times, with a strict limit on the number of people per day. An Ibama official will go there to determine the conditions for visitation, then take down names on a first-come, first-served basis. If everything is OK, you can go in only on your belly, without any sunscreen and without flippers, for about 20 minutes. To get there, you must go to **Sueste beach** (Praia de Sueste), then travel over to Atalaia in a vehicle caravan. Out in front of the beach you can see **Ilha do Frade** island. Even if you can't visit the pool, the beach itself is beautiful, with rock walls.

★★Boat Excursions

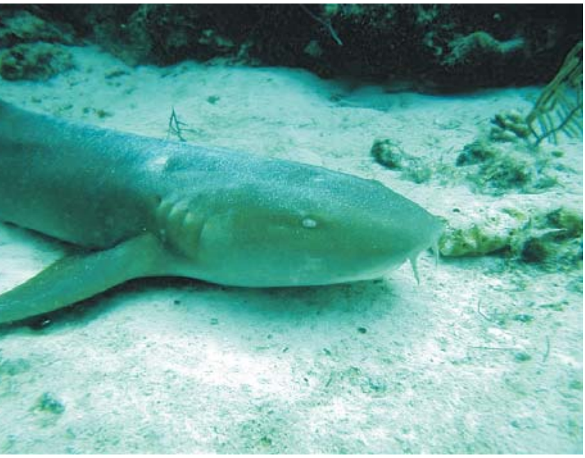
The only way to see the archipelago is from the water because setting foot on the smaller islands is prohibited. You will normally cruise along the outskirts of the natural habitat of rotator dolphins, who come to the boats and perform their acrobatics close-up.

Heading along the continental side of the island you go all the way to **Sapata Point**, with its interesting "Brazil" shaped rock formation, and with a stop at Sancho beach for a swim. You also visit the "growling rock" at **Rugido de Leão**. Bring a mask and snorkel with you or rent a kit and wear sunglasses because the glare from the water can be intense. At least a dozen boats leave from the Santo Antonio Port. The association of boat operators is **Abatur** (☎ 81-3169-1360).

Kayaking

In a sea kayak you can really enjoy the peace and quiet of the island paddling around the Two Brothers rock formations. The double-seat kayaks come with a guide and a support boat. Contact **Remos da Ilha** (☎ 81-3619-1914).

★★★Scuba Diving



Nurse shark

This warm-water wildlife sanctuary is a haven for divers. Visibility reaches up to 130-165 feet/40-50 m in the dry season (August to November) with the best conditions in September. The water temperature is on average 79°F/26°C, making it possible to dive without a wetsuit, and you will have the opportunity to see some rare fish up-close, including sharks. *National Geographic* filmed a famous expedition here, featuring a rare pink nurse shark that lives nearby. All sharks here are harmless. Other creatures you may see are big rays, turtles, trumpet fish, eels, barracuda, and many other smaller fish amid the amazing corals and sponges on the reefs. A two-tank dive with equipment rentals recently cost $75-90, plus an environmental surcharge of about $5. No knives are permitted and you cannot take anything, not even a shell, out of the water. Local authorities are also very worried about the corals.

The 20 or so dive sites vary from season to season. There are popular sites around Ilha da Rata and the little islands to the north of the main island. Some of the sites have multiple passageways through the reefs. There is a cave where a gigantic jewfish resides, and you will be asked to stay well above the sandy sea bed to avoid stirring up silt when you visit him. He doesn't seem to mind all the attention. There is also a wreck dive – a Colonial corvette for advanced divers with wreck diving certification.

Fernando de Noronha has first-rate dive operators with equipment and services at an international standard. **Atlantis Divers** (☎ 81-3619-1371), owned by multilingual Frenchman Patrick Muller, has the best equipment, including re-breathers and boats. The service is very good at **Noronha Divers** (☎ 81-3619-1112). Offices for both are in the Villa downhill from the Palacio Sao Miguel. **Aguas Claras** (☎ 81-3619-1225) is another option, on Almeida Boldró. All are recommended.

Surfing

From December to March there is good surfing, with up to 15-foot waves attracting international competitions. The recommended beaches are Americano, Praia do Meio, Conceição, Quixaba, Boldró, and Cacimba do Padre.

★★★Water Sledding

With a mask, fins, snorkel and a strong grip, you can have a wild time in Fernando de Noronha. Pulled at high speeds by a motor boat, you hold a special board that lets you to dive underwater by tilting down, or you can surface by tilting up. It's a great and effortless way to see the reefs and the remains of a shipwreck in the port. With a little practice you can do some dolphin-like acrobatics of your own. The quick ride costs $30-40. Call ☎ 81-3619-1301 or ask at the port for your options.

★Trails

If you want a bit of exercise you can hire an Ibama-registered guide at the Tamar visitor center to take you on the island's two trails. The main one is Capim-Acu, 3.7 miles/six km long. Along the way you will get a close look at the island's flora and fauna as well as the four scenic overlooks, so bring a camera. You'll be walking in the sun, so be prepared.

Where to Stay

Lodging runs from Spartan to somewhat comfortable. There has been an improvement from when the island began receiving tourists in the 1990s and you could expect only the absolute basics. Generally, you will now stay in converted homes.

Some places still have no hot water (or it only lasts for a short while), no air-conditioning, and maybe a ceiling fan, but more and more are getting better equipped. All should offer a breakfast of fruit, cold cuts, cereal and bread. Some serve optional full board, but you should opt for the restaurants.

There is a price table "suggested" by the hospitality association, which is nothing more than racketeering and should be illegal, but you can generally talk them down if there are rooms available. On the plus side, locals have corrected the mistake by federal tourism officials to do away with starred hotel classification in Brazil and have implemented their own grade – one to three dolphins. So you at least know what you are getting.

Prices drop a little from April to June and August to November. Transport from the airport to the pousada is sometimes included. You might want to stay in Villa do Trinta, which is a little more secluded than the Villa but just a few minutes on foot, and can save you money.

There is a list of dolphin-graded lodging with contact info at www.noronha.pe.gov.br, but here are some suggestions:

Pousada Maravilha

Pousada Maravilha ($$$$$) is the only luxury option on the island, but it's much more expensive than anywhere else. Here you will lack for nothing. (www.pousadamaravilha.com.br, ☎ 81-3619-0028).

Pousada Ze Maria ($$$$) is a high-end option on the island, with a view of the Morro do Pico. On Rua Nice Cordeiro, 1. (www.pousadazemaria.com.br, ☎ 81-3619-1347).

Pousada da Morena ($$$) has been around since 1990 and is one of the better known pousadas. It has a view of the Morro do Pico and of the ocean. Rua Nice Cordeiro, 2600 (☎ 81-3619-1142).

Pousada de Dandão ($$) has great value in Villa da Trinta not far from the supermarket, with spacious, clean rooms and good service. João da Rocha Amorim (☎ 81-3619-1154).

Pousada Solar dos Ventos ($$-$$$) has chalets not far from the beach. Afternoon tea is included. (www.solardosventos.com.br, ☎ 81-3619-1142).

Pousada Solar dos Ventos

Where to Eat

The cuisine is frankly not the best thing about Fernando de Noronha. You can eat fairly well at certain places. In general, the farther from the Villa, the better the restaurants, so don't be fooled by the crowds. One island specialty is *tubalhau*, a shark meat version of salted cod-fish *bacalhau*, seasoned and fried in croquettes, which you can try at the shark museum or in the Villa. Another is *peixe de banana* or fish cooked in banana leaves. You can also buy cold cuts, bread, fruit and other basic items at the supermarket in Villa do Trinta if you want. At night along the road to Villa do Trinta locals gather to eat at roadside barbecues ($) – if you don't speak Portuguese, just point at what you want. Everybody there is used to tourists.

Ecologikus ($$$) is the most famous restaurant, which serves a great *moqueca* (Bahian-style fish and palm oil stew), with various other sea food options, but the service is slow. It's a bit remote, on a dirt road near the airport on the Estrada de Sueste – look for the sign and the buggies parked out front (☎ 81-3619-1404).

Nascimento ($$$) is in Villa do Trinta. It has the best variety and quality in a nice atmosphere with a deck. The picanha, or Brazilian-style steak, is good. It's at Rua Major Costa 115 (☎ 81-3619-1546).

For Italian (pizza and pasta) try **Trattoria da Morena** ($$) on Rua Nice Cordeiro, 2600, in Floresta Nova (☎ 81-3619-1142).

The **Tartarugão** ($$), on Almeida do Boldró near Praia do Cachorro, serves grilled meats (☎ 81-3619-1331).

On Saturday there is a decent feijoada (a black bean dish) at the **Dolphin Hotel** ($$$) on the main highway, also open the rest of the week (☎ 81-3465-0430).

Porto Marlin Sushi ($$$) at the port is a Japanese restaurant (☎ 81-3619-1158).

What to Buy

There are some shacks in the Villa that sell local handicrafts, but most of the stuff comes from the mainland and is overpriced. In fact, there is not much here worth buying (one of the strong points of the island is that it is not very commercial). You might take a look at the T-shirts and other items at the Tamar center to support their wildlife preservation efforts.

Paraíba

Paraíba is a state rich with culture and history. Its most striking feature is the gorgeous coastline, with its exotic beaches, but in the capital city of **João Pessoa** there is a vibrant cultural life and a Colonial old town district to explore. Inland is the **Sertão** and the sun-baked Caatinga desert, filled with history – dating not only to the revolutionary period of the last century, but to millions of years ago in **Souza**, where the footsteps of dinosaurs have been preserved in rock. There are tiny historic settlements like **Piancó**, where there was a tragic clash between revolutionaries and defenders of the city in 1926. You might enjoy a side-trip with local outfitters to **Ingá**, where there are strange rock carvings said to be placed there by indigenous tribes, or to **Cabaceiras**, where you can climb or go bouldering on austere desert rock formations that resemble the fists of giants punching through the Earth. Also in Paraíba is **Campina Grande**, which every year hosts one of the most famous festivals in Brazil with bonfires, food and dancing.

Paraíba is not often traveled, especially by foreigners, but its mix of cordial rusticity, friendliness and stunning native beauty make it one of the nicer and most economical destinations along the coast.

João Pessoa

- The easternmost point of South America
- Enjoy tropical coastline with stunning views
- Arts and culture thrive in this quaint city

João Pessoa is the state capital. This presentable modern city (it claims to be the city with the most trees in all of South America), is famous for the turquoise waters and the colorful façades in the historic district. The city was founded in 1585, though its name was changed several times over the years. Most recently, it was named after a jurist and governor, João Pessoa, who became the President of Brazil before his assassination in 1930. It is to him that the city owes its modern look following the European fashions of the day. He also gave Paraíba its memorable state motto – "I Refuse" ("Nego") – when asked by then President Washington Luis to support a candidate he didn't like. In addition to its urban attractions, there is **Tambaba** – the first officially nude beach in the Northeast. Many of the beaches in the city and most along the coastline are seldom traveled. As in most of the Northeast Region, there is a mix of poverty and opulence here, but through it all there is a strong undercurrent of culture that makes the most mundane street scene seem like an interesting event. It is here that great Brazilian writers, such as Ascendino Leite, make their home, and young poets still recite their works in public squares.

The city boasts that it is the easternmost point in the Americas. While here, you won't want to pass up the opportunity to sample the "flavors of the earth" – which is what the locals call their heavy regional dishes like tapioca and carne do sol. The climate is tropical and semi-arid, with temperatures climbing to 104°F/40°C during the hottest months, though an average of 80°F/26°C is more common. If you want to enjoy the sunny weather there are boat trips to nearby sand bars that change constantly in the tide and crystal-clear snorkeling pools where you can feed the fish. Or you can gobble crab or lobster brought in on speedboats by the finest restaurants in town. For diving enthusiasts João Pessoa is an up-and-coming scuba diving location, and the coastline in general is one of the best and least traveled in the entire region. Because of the eastern location, the time zone here is one hour ahead of most of Brazil.

How to Get Here

João Pessoa is just a few hours by car from two of the main cities in the Northeast: Recife is 75 miles/125 km to the south in Pernambuco, and Natal is 108 miles/180 km to the north in Rio Grande do Norte. Sometimes it is more convenient to fly to Recife, where there is an international airport, then take a car or bus (about two hours) to João Pessoa.

Once in the city, you can rent a compact car for about $25 per day , while a taxi from one side of town to the other should cost about $5-10. There is a special service that helps if you get stuck. You can call a taxi toll-free at ☎ 0800-83-1234.

Getting around by car is not very difficult because João Pessoa was carefully planned by the French architect Pierre Rohn. Its characteristic wide, tree-lined streets and radar-controlled slow traffic also make it easy for foreign drivers. From the city to the better beaches of the coast is about an hour's drive along a very scenic road.

João Pessoa **airport** has flights connecting to and originating in all major cities of the Northeast.

You can rent a car from the airport at **Localiza** (☎ 83-3232-1130) or **Avis** (☎ 83-3247-3050) for about $60 per day. If you plan to travel inland be sure to rent on an unlimited-km basis! There are car rental companies in town so you can rent from your hotel too – ask at the desk. A word to the wise though: João Pessoa has lots of radar speed traps: tall black pillars on either side of the road can cost you money when you return the car. When you return the car there is a gas station less than five minutes from the airport, which cheaper than filling up at the rental company – the clerks at Localiza are friendly and will even tell you how to get here.

Tips for Enjoying João Pessoa

Paraíba is best known for the beaches. Because the region still does not have a lot of infrastructure and services outside of João Pessoa (though the roads are good), you might consider hiring a guide in town who can facilitate your trip by showing you how to get around and serving as an interpreter.

The fascinating region beyond the capital is still not very well equipped to receive tourists, and it is strongly advised to hire a tour agency or at least a guide if you plan to explore beyond the city. The beaches you can drive to by yourself, but guides are helpful to show you where to eat or fill up your gas tank.

There is a **Tour Guide's Association** (Sindicato dos Guias) at the **Mercado de Artesenato Paraíbana** (☎ 83-9981-3294 or 83 9332-2832). The market is on Avenida Senador Ruio Carneiro in Tambaú, open from 9 am-7 pm (closed Sunday). Any taxi can take you there.

For guides, free travel advice, how to catch a bus, to find out what the tides are if you're off to the sand bars at Picãozinho or Ilha Vermelha, or even where to stay in João Pessoa, you can call **PB Tur's** toll free hotline at ☎ 0800-281-9229.

To see the capital, a four-hour City Tour by local guides is one way to see the historic sites (see *Sightseeing*, below). From there you can head to Jacumã, the rustic beach resort area to the south of the city, or Tambaba, the nudist beach.

If you want to travel inland, plan on at least two or even three days. There is a lot to see off the beaten track in the Sertão, but you may need a guide to get there because of precarious conditions.

Festivals & Events

The largest ★**São João Festival** anywhere is in Campina Grande. It lasts the entire month of June, sometimes starting a week late and ending the first week of July.

Campina Grande is about 72 miles/120 km into the arid interior of Paraíba along Highway BR-230. Once you get into town, the road signs are easy to follow. The entire city is decked out in paper banners, streamers and colored lights, and more than 400,000 people show up for the party. The São João bonfires blaze and the sound of accordions, triangles, and the special drum called a zabumba bleat out the jangling, syncopated rhythm of forró for the dancing crowd, clad in colorful costumes. Every day there is square dancing (quadrilhas), as well as concerts.

The party goes on day and night, with donkey races, food stalls selling traditional snacks like pamonha (a sweet made from corn), bode (goat) with cuscus (fried corn meal), or fried mandioca (manioc), and an unbelievable racket that echoes through the city. The epicenter of this ecstatic mayhem is the people's park, **Parque do Povo**, where stages are mounted with various different shows simultaneously. The large stage is for big-name Brazilian musicians, while there are smaller ones for a square-dancing competition and local artists.

Rustic Campina Grande has just opened a resort, the **Garden Hotel** ($$), said to be the first in town. Another good hotel is the **Serrano** ($$), at Rua Tavares Cavalcante 27, but with only 56 rooms so you should make reservations well in advance. A third option is **Hotel Village** ($$). If you can't book a room in town, don't despair. Local residents sign up with the local tour board to offer lodging ($) in their homes and, if you need to, call **PB Tur** at the number listed below for help.

For More Information

PBTur has a special information center with friendly staff, shops and paid Internet access right near Tambaú beach. At Avenida Almirante Tamandare 100, it opens from 8 am-7 pm (☎ 0800-281-9929). There are also PB Tur stands at the airport (☎ 83-3253-4010), open from 10 am-4 pm, and at the bus station (☎ 83-3218-6655), open from 8 am-6 pm.

You can also consult the official municipal site, **joaopessoa.pb.gov.br** (no "www"), but it's not of much use if you don't read Portuguese.

You can exchange cash at **PB Cambio** in Manaira Shopping, Avenida Flavio R Coutinho, on the northern side of the Manaira neighborhood (☎ 83-3246-2612).

At the time of writing João Pessoa had very little street crime in the areas visited by tourists. If you do have a problem, there is a tourist police station at the PBTur complex (see above). João Pessoa is probably the safest capital city in the Northeast Region.

Sightseeing

A city tour offered by local guides takes about four hours. The following sites are generally on the itinerary. You can also go solo by taking a taxi or a rental car.

João Pessoa is divided into an Upper and Lower City. The **Cidade Baixa** (or "lower city") is the historic district, with Colonial Baroque architecture. The old town district is distinct from Brazil's other coastal capitals because it was built a few miles inland instead of directly on the water.

Church of Saint Francis

(B. Araújo)

The **São Francisco Cultural Center** (Centro Cultural de São Francisco), a Baroque complex built starting in 1589, is the most important. Taking almost 200 years to be completed in 1779, the complex is a remarkable feat. It includes the **Church of Saint Francis** (Igreja de São

Francisco), the **Saint Anthony Convent** (Convento de Santo Antonio) and the **Popular Culture Museum**. The entire complex takes about a half-day to visit. There is some impressive artwork inside the church, including gold and Portuguese ceramic tiles. Outside in the walled courtyard are Colonial cannons. The church has only one tower because special taxes had to be paid to the bishop if two were built. It is on the Praça de São Francisco square, open Tuesday through Sunday from 9-12 am and 2-5 pm, on Monday 2-5 pm. The fee is under $1.

HOTEL GLOBO

Hotel Globo

The old **Hotel Globo** at Praça São Pedro Gonçalves is a historic landmark with a fantastic view of the green city canopy and the marvelous sunsets. The Hotel Globo was built in 1928 in the swank Varadouro neighbourhood. It became the haunt of powerful political men and wealthy speculators who stayed here during the period of intrigues that marked this city's past.

Another worthwhile historic site is the **Santa Roza Theater** (Teatro Santa Roza), one of Brazil's oldest. It dates from 1889, the same year that the Empire crumbled and the First Republic was born. At Praça Pedro Américo square, it opens weekdays from 2 to 6 pm and on weekends from 4 to 8 pm, when there are occasionally shows.

The **Seixas Point** (Ponta da Seixas) is the easternmost point of South America, and has a monument nearby with a lighthouse and an overlook that could not be built directly over the point because of mudslides. There are some stands that sell mementoes and green coconuts. At the point you can actually go swimming from a nice little beach. If you are there at sunset you will be one of the first people on the continent to see it. It's 8.4 miles/14 km south of João Pessoa but, believe it or not, you are closer to West Africa here than to São Paulo!

Adventures on the Water

★Beaches

The best beaches in João Pessoa are **Tambaú**, **Manaira** and **Cabo Branco**, where the better hotels, restaurants and nightlife are located. Along the boardwalk are kiosks selling drinks and snacks. There is a noticeable prostitution scene on the boardwalk at night, but the area is generally safe. And the beaches are largely pollution-free. The beaches to the south and to the north are some of the best in the entire country, and many are practically deserted, making this the perfect place to get away from civilization for a while.

★★★Southern Coast (Jacumã)

No more than 21 miles/35 km south of the João Pessoa, you will find numerous beaches separated by high cliffs on the coastal Highway PB 008. You can, depending on the tide, find natural pools along this very seductive coastline of canyons and corals. Stop for a lobster lunch or let yourself roam free over the white sands and coconut groves near the fresh-water rivers that feed the ocean.

Coqueirinho beach

The most outstanding beaches are **Gramame**, **Amor**, **Jacumã**, **Tabatinga**, **Carapibus**, **Coqueirinho**, and the famous **Tambaba** nudist beach.

Renting a car is easy in the city and just 21 miles/35 km away (about a half-hour) you can visit **Ponta de Seixas**, a geodesic monument at the easternmost point of the Americas. The beaches of the southern coast are separated by coral reefs and by high cliffs.

The region called **Jacumã** is where the best beaches really start. Jacumã beach itself tends to be a bit crowded with lots of beach houses and condos. Here there is an interesting rock formation called "pedra furada" that makes a six-foot natural arch.

You can have lunch at the **Canyon de Coqueirinho** on Coqueirinho beach, or explore the exotic delta of the River Gramame at **Praia de Gramme**. Coquerinho has some interesting cliff formations if you want to hike a little way's inland.

Check out the arch-like rock formations at **Praia do Amor** or the natural pools and coral reefs of **Carapibus** and **Tabatinga**.

There is also the naturalist beach, **Tambaba**. The small beach remains very low-key, despite its risqué reputation, and there are some rules to be observed: no men allowed without a woman and no photography of any kind is prohibited. No clothing is allowed on the beach itself. Unaccompanied males who want to check out the beach can generally pay one of the females hanging around in front to enter with them. Just be nice.

The farther from the city you go, the fewer people you will see.

The beaches of Coqueirinho, Tabatinga and Carapibus all have the best access and reasonable services such as restaurants.

As you go farther south, it becomes less developed. Some people go by dune buggy to Barra do Garaú or Bela, but today a car is probably faster.

Access routes were being improved at the time of writing but in general you can expect divots and lurching dirt roads on the perpendicular beach access roads from the very well-paved main road. Drive slowly to avoid dropping your muffler.

For lodging, try **Ekoara** ($$$$), on Coquerinho beach. It is a mini-resort with good service. Chalets fit up to four people, so for groups or families it's a good value. ☎ 83-9311-9771 or 83-9988-2545. Credit cards are accepted.

Nearby there are a lot of other options and you should look around because new ones open up all the time. For the tried and true, you might consider the **Viking** ($$), which is outrageously decorated like a dragon boat. It's in the Jacumã neighborhood, which is a bit of a walk from the beach. ☎ 83-3290-1015 or www.hotelviking.com.br.

Pousada Enseada do Sol

The **Pousada Enseada do Sol** ($$$) has a trail to the beach and an awesome view at Praia de Carapibus. ☎ 83-3290-1900 or www.enseadadosol.com.br.

For a good meal, the best option is the **Canyon** ($$) at Coqueirinho beach. Besides serving fresh fish meals such as *moquecas* (fish stew), the place is charmingly decorated with an outdoor dining area overlooking the beach. Right alongside is a beautiful rocky canyon that gives the place its name.

★★Northern Coast (Baía de Traição)

Access to the Northern Coast is a little more difficult, but worth a visit. If you only have one day, go to the southern coast, but try to schedule at least a day exploring the enchanting and hospitable Northern Coast as well.

The easiest way to get here is by car. Take BR 101 or, better, cross via ferry boat from João Pessoa to the town of Cabadelo and follow the road signs all the way to Lucena. From there you can get to beaches at Mamanguape, Miriri e Camaratuba – each divided by a tropical waterway. Or visit the Potiguari indigenous tribe at Baía da Traição. Access is more difficult in general, though you can still go there and back to João Pessoa in one day by rental car. Farther up the coast ,you may prefer to stay overnight. A two-day trip will give you plenty of time to explore the historical fortress and indigenous village.

Other sights include an historic church at **Lucena**, in tropical Baroque style that was typical in the region during the 16th century.

Paraíba River

The easiest way to explore the North Coast is by car on BR 230 from the city. But you should take a ferry boat in the town called Cabadelo about 18 miles/30 km north and continue on the other side of the delta of the Paraíba River to Costinha, then on to Lucena. This will cut significant amount of time off your trip. Otherwise you will have to take BR 101 to PB 025. After Lucena, the region becomes even more sparsely occupied

At the area called **Barra de Mamanguape**, there is a wildlife refuge for manatees (take a right where indicated on BR 101). Here you can observe these enormous and docile creatures. A bus to and from Mamanguape and João Pessoa takes two or three hours and costs about $4 on the Rio Tinto bus line.

The region called **Baía de Traição** (the “Bay of Treason”) is an exotic stretch of coastal forest where the Dutch and Portuguese fought a bloody battle for supremacy in the 17th century. Baía de Traição has sprung up from a little fishing village. The beaches have a different quality than on the Southern Coast, with coconut groves and a much less commercial gloss in the towns. To get there by car, continue on BR 100 to Rio Tinto, a former German colony, and on to Baía de Traição. It takes an hour and 10 minutes and the roads are in good condition.

Indigenous villages nearby have been here at least since the Tabajaras repelled the first Portuguese expeditions in 1501. Today they are the Potiguars.

The Potiguara indigenous lands are 3,6 miles/six km to the north. In all, there are about 27 different villages. The easiest to visit is **Galego**, a village with 270 inhabitants on two sides of the road heading north from Baía de Traição. On each side is a grass hut selling artifacts made from shell, bone, and coconut.

The houses look identical to the others in the area, and they can be easy to miss if you don’t pay attention. Unlike other villages governed by the

Baía de Traição

(B. Araújo)

Funai indigenous affairs bureau in Brazil, here you can come and go as you please without any paperwork.

The chief of the village is one Senhor Antonio who chants poems, and will paint himself with black body ink and dress in a traditional grass skirt if you want to take a photo. You may have to shell out a few bucks for knickknacks (and some are very well made).

Nearby are the ruins of a Colonial fortress, beautiful beaches, rivers, lagoons, and waterfalls in a gorgeous setting.

A great place for lunch is the outdoor eatery, **Forasteiro Bar de Praia** ($), open 10 am-10 pm every day, serving grilled meats, fried fish, and *moquecas* (fish and palm oil stew), in Baía de Traição. Rejane, the owner, is proud of the fish caught right offshore. The bar is one of the only places to eat in town and is right off the main road. When you get to the church in town, stop and park. There are a couple of little alleyways leading to the beach. Take one of them and from there you will see the tables and chairs. ☎ 83-9979-3011.

If you opt to stay overnight in the region, the best option is the brand new **Catumbaé** ($), a simple but comfortable pousada 300 yards from Trincheiras beach with breakfast, TV, and Internet on Rua do Coronel 100 (also called Prainha). ☎ 83-3296-1515 or 83-9922-8284.

Boat Excursions & Snorkeling

The coastal reefs are extremely common along this part of the Brazilian coastline, normally a km or two offshore. During low tide, the reefs are partially exposed at the surface and become huge tide pools, with water as warm as bathwater because of the intense tropical sun. To get there you need to take BR 230 about 11 miles/18 km north. From downtown, a taxi costs about $10. Boats make the trip on weekends and every day during the tourist season.

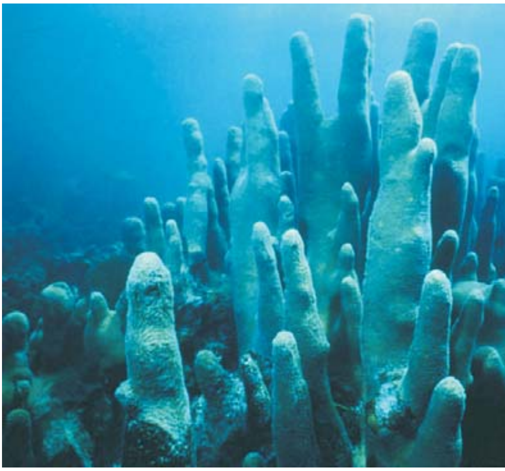
The **Ilha de Areia Vermelha** is an island with a reddish sand bank and amazing natural pools during low tide between the island and the coast. The shallow water here ranges from three to six feet, which is ideal for

Ilha de Areia Vermelha

snorkeling. There is an abundance of tiny fish that you will want to photograph if you have an underwater camera. Visibility is not great, up to about 35 feet because of the silt, but the bright sunlight helps. On the sand bar you can buy drinks or seafood lunch from specially adapted boats, with tables and chairs set up for this purpose. While this is a state marine park, it is poorly controlled by local authorities.

Picãozinho Reef has tide pools formed by calcified algae and coral. Boats leave from Camboinhas Beach or Poços Beach to the north of town. The trip costs around $5. You have two choices: catamarans for up to 60 people or motorboats for up to six. The catamarans are more crowded but recommended – they are a bit more comfortable, have bathrooms on board and make the trip on a regular schedule. The motorboats ("lanchas") are quicker but they don't stay out there with you, so you run the risk of not having a ride back to the mainland! There are a lot of them, though, and in the worst case you can ask the catamaran operators or boats that serve meals to send one to pick you up. Note that there are no regular schedules because of the variations in the tide. Ask at your hotel for a tide table to either destination for times when you are visiting, or call the handy PB Tur hotline.

★Scuba Diving



Coral pillars
(www.noaa.gov)

Paraíba is a great dive destination that very few people know about. There is only one operator, but don't let that bother you because they have invested heavily and can show you the best of the dozens of tropical reefs. The best diving is from October through March, when visibility exceeds 100 feet/30 m on a good day. No wetsuit is needed since the water is 80-86°F/27-30°C, except in some regions with a thermocline deeper than 165 feet/50 m far off the coast. Once you get past the coastal reefs, the seafloor becomes basically flat, with scattered reef formations close to the surface called "*tacis*" – some of these coral pillars grow over

50 feet/15 m tall. Your operator will suggest sites, depending on the conditions, which can include some fairly strong currents off the canyons. There are basic to fairly deep dives, drift dives, five shipwrecks and night options, with more than 20 dive sites to choose from. Rare sea life is found here, including an exotic yellow tubular sponge the size of a drum and the stridently colored "cangulo" fish found practically nowhere else. You may also see huge sponge colonies, varieties of sand sharks and schools of tropical fish. The dive operator here is **Extreme Oriental Mergulho & Aventura**, and you can contact Ismar or Carlos at mareberto@mareberto.jpa.com.br or ☎ 83-3246-5697, 83-9983-4017, 83-9936-9661, 83-9986-2772.

Surfing, Kitesurfing & Windsurfing

Surfers, windsurfers and kitesurfers will enjoy the beaches of **Camaratuba**, **Baía da Traição**, and **Campina** along the Northern Coast (see below). Local trainer Rafael Trappo has a site, www.bessakiteclub.com, with information about kitesurfing in João Pessoa and Cabedelo.

Where to Eat

João Pessoa has variations on regional Northeasten cuisine with heavy ingredients such as mandioca (manioc), feijão de corda (cord beans), paçoca (sun-dried beef ground with a mortar and pestle in manioc flour), and baião-de-dois (rice, beans, often with dried beef and cheese). Other good options are fish and seafood (on or near the coast) and grilled meats. The **Manaiara** ($$) has the best self-service buffet where you pay by weight for a choice of dozens of traditional specialties in a charming outdoor dining area. Park on the street or take a cab to Avenida General Edson Ramalho, 696, in the Manaira neighborhood, about two blocks in from the beach (closed on Monday). Another option for regional grub is **Tábua de Carne** ($$) at Avenida Senador Rui Carneiro, 648, in Tambaú.

Where to Stay

The recommended section of town is Tambaú, which is an upscale neighborhood with excellent beaches, restaurants and other options, or the adjacent Cabo Branco beach just south of Tambaú. Lodging is fairly cheap in João Pessoa and it is better to go upscale.

Hardman Praia ($$) is an upscale option close to the nightlife. It is at Avenida João Mauricio, 1341, in Praia de Manaira (www.hotelhardman.com.br, ☎ 83-3246-8811).

The **Igatu Praia Hotel** ($$) is clean and comfortable, facing the beach, with very good value. At Avenida Cabo Branco, 1984 (www.igatuhotel.com.br, ☎ 83-3247-8808).

Tropical Tambaú ($$$) is the best in town, with a seaside view, resort atmosphere and full services. It is also conveniently close to PB Tur where you can get information. At Avenida Almirante Tamandare, 229, in Praia de Tambaú (☎ 83-3218-1919).

Tropical Tambaú hotel

What to Buy

Here you can find great bargains on textiles such as colorful hammocks (costing from $10-80, depending on how fancy they are), blankets, and well tailored clothing at a low price. Cashews are abundant and cheap. You can get very good deals on great local cachaça (sugar cane liquor). The best brands are Volupia or, if you can find it, Serra Limpa. Ceramics are a local specialty, especially erotic designs typical of the region. The best place is at the **Mercado de Artesanato Paraíbana**, at Avenida Senador Rui Carneiro in Tambaú, where you can find just about everything produced in the state at reasonable prices. At the Manaira restaurant (see *Where to Eat*), you can buy cheap cashew nuts called *castanha de caju* (another typical product of the state), cachaça, or traditional bricks of brown sugar to be broken with a mallet into bite-sized pieces called *rapadura*.

Side-Trips

Caatinga flower

There are plenty of options for side-trips inland where you can explore a zone with a climate type found nowhere else in the world – the rocky, tropical monsoon desert called the Caatinga.

Here, the parched desert springs alive with amazingly fertile soil in April when it rains and the desert vegetation flowers. One of the best parts of the trip is that you can buy wonderful and cheap roasted cashew nuts from roadside sellers. Local outfitters can drive you to the interior of the state in air-conditioned vehicles, but also consider a rental car – the roads are well paved these days and clearly marked. A professional guide is, however, strongly recommended for some destinations. If your itinerary is flexible, you could extend a road trip over the rugged interior to other states, such as Maranhão or Piauí, or into neighboring Rio Grande do Norte. There are about four recommended outfitters in João Pessoa to take you there: **Bora Bora**, boraboraturismo@br.inter.net, ☎ 83-3226-5585; **Cliotur**, cliotur@cliotur.com.br, ☎ 83-3247-4460; **Luckreceptivo**, luckjpa@luckviagens.com.br, ☎ 83-3247-1856; and **Mais Brasil**, terrabrasil@gmail.com, ☎ 83-3224-3050.

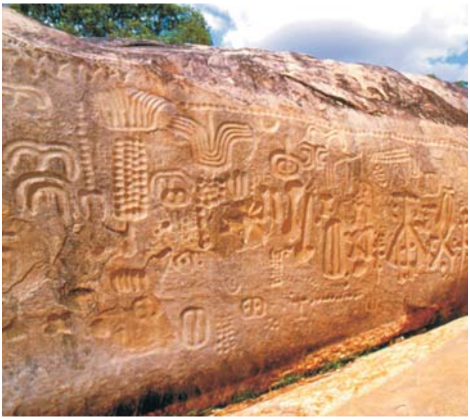
Cabaceiras Natural Rock Gardens

Paraíba has a great reputation among rock climbers and desert hikers in the area called Cabaceiras, still being developed. In the rocky scrublands toward the Sertão desert, the area has immense boulders in amazing formations. The "Lajedo de Pai Mateus," a natural rock formation, has appeared in films, and in the region local guides can show you cave paintings. Contact the local city hall for information (☎ 83-3356-1117 or 83-3356-1104).

The "Helmet Rock"
(Courtesy of Manary Ecotours)

Ingá Rock Carvings

Mysterious rock carvings are at Ingá. Called the Itacoatiaras, these enigmatic carvings have never been translated and are officially considered indiginous inscriptions. Local authorities insist they are authentic but some experts in Pre-Colombian art have questioned their authenticity, suggesting they could have been carved by Europeans. This wall of interconnected pictographs is striking and at the top of the list for weirdest carvings in the Americas. The trip out through the so-called Agreste Paraibano is a pleasant drive through fertile valleys and hills. Contact the local city hall for information (☎ 83-3394-1236 or 83-3394-1136).



Ingá rock carvings
(Courtesy of Manary Ecotours)

Sugar Cane Rum Distilleries at Areia & Alagoa Grande

To see how sugar and cachaça sugar cane liquor is produced, you can tour two famous regions in Paraíba. Areia's distillery is in the so-called Brejo, where there is a Cachaça Museum, not to mention waterfalls and native vegetation for hikers. Contact city hall for more info: ☎ 83-3362-2288 or 83-3362-2288. In Alagoa Grande you can visit the Volupia distillery, which produces one of the most famous cachaças in Brazil. The restaurant serves "food of the earth" or comida da terra, as the local cuisine is known, with various specialties prepared from nearby staples like goat, dried beef, beans and manioc. Sample them all in the regional lunch. Senhor Vicente is the owner and you can call for reservations at ☎ 83-9982-2917.

Valley of the Dinosaurs

Near the city of Sousa is the Vale dos Dinossauros, considered one of the most important archeological sites in the country. Here in the middle of the scalding Caatinga, a fertile, tropical desert zone with unique vegetation and wildlife, the wild badlands of the Northeast interior, are fossilized dinosaur tracks from 40 million years ago, according to Harvard paleontologists who worked here in 1925, five years after the fossils were discovered.

Fossilized dinosaur tracks

(Courtesy of PBTUR)

There are two separate footprint trails, one from an iguanadon, considered the longest dinosaur footprint sequence in the world, and another from the velociraptor, which ran at speeds of up to 48 miles/80 km per hour. Nearby you can visit more sites with dozens of different dinosaur footprints as well as other kinds of fossils in the Rio de Peixe sedimentary basin.

The park is 252 miles/420 km from João Pessoa along BR-230, a well-paved road with hauntingly beautiful desert scenery. You can go solo, and the best way in is to rent a car. A bus takes seven hours from João Pessoa, passing through Campina Grande and Patos. It costs about $20. From there you will need to take a taxi to the park.

Entrance was free on a recent visit but the park is virtually ignored by local authorities and the guides who work there survive on tips.

Robson, a descendent of the settler who first discovered the footprints in 1920, works at the site. The volunteer guides at the park can take you to all the other destinations for about $20. There is a small museum as well with exhibits on how the park developed and what the dinosaurs were like in the region, but the footprints are the main attraction.

Try one of the locally grown coconuts sold here, said be the tastiest in all of Brazil.

On the way into town you will pass though a little village called **Aparecida**, where colorful textiles are made. In nearby **Rio de Peixe**, a cool little town, you can ask for "Lampião," an eccentric friend who is one of the most informed historians in the region.

Lodging here leaves a bit to be desired: **Gadelha Palace** ($) on Travessa Luciander Rocha, 2, in Sousa, has dinosaur decorations, a pool and air-conditioning.

Rio Grande do Norte

Rio Grande do Norte was virtually unknown by foreign travelers a decade ago. It has now become a popular destination for European tourists, but is still not widely visited by Americans. This is ironic, since the United States military maintained a base here during World War II, leaving behind English words that have made their way into local dialect ("junkerbox" = radio), not to mention the roads and other infrastructure that helps gives the capital, Natal, a higher quality of life than most other cities in Brazil. The region was explored in 1597 by a military expedition sent by King Philip of Portugal to destroy the French foothold on the northeast coast of South America. The expedition made its way northward from Paraíba, on both land and sea, finally arriving at the mouth of the Potengi River, where they built a wooden fortress. Eventually, on December 25, 1599, they built the first cathedral in the town named after the Portuguese word for Christmas, "Natal." The Dutch invaded shortly thereafter and took the fort, but after about 100 years of fighting, the Portuguese finally took control. The province was declared a state in 1889.

The tropical, dune-lined coastline, with 300 days per year of equatorial sunshine and sensational beaches under stark red cliffs, is a worthwhile destination for its natural beauty, although the state does not have the robust cultural life of Recife in Pernambuco or even João

Pessoa in neighboring Paraíba. To make the most of your trip, **Pipa**, the small resort town south of Natal, is recommended, with its mix of out-of-the-way rusticity, first-rate lodging options and incredible natural beauty. Or head north to **Genipabu**, another renowned beach resort area with crystal clear waters and lagoons. One of the most striking features of the landscape, besides the cliffs that run along the coastline, are the white sand dunes, which can and probably should be explored by dune buggy.

Natal

- Visit this upscale and sunny city
- A safe beach resort area with a lot to do
- Home of the world's biggest cashew tree

Natal, sometimes called the City of Sunshine, is an upscale and worthwhile beach destination. The quality of life here is among the very best in Brazil and the clean, modern capital does not lack for good restaurants and nightlife. Less chaotic than the other capitals of the Northeast, Natal is the most prepared of all the northeastern cities for international tourists, with the exception perhaps of Salvador. The most famous part of town is **Ponta Negra**, where the best hotels can be found. Most travelers end up there. Sadly, the once rustic fishing beach has been overrun by European developers, who have transformed it into something that looks more like Ibiza than Brazil with Tex-Mex bars and tourist shows. Even so, the city boasts a high quality of life with cordial locals, good security overall, fresh air, excellent infrastructure, and very good (though expensive) resorts, restaurants and hotels. Besides the excellent beaches, you can visit some of the Colonial spots in town such as the famous **Rei Magos** Colonial fortress or the interesting **Parque das Dunas** dune park. It should take a day or two to see everything of interest, though you might want to stay longer to enjoy the beaches. For a glimpse of paradise nearby, though, try incredible **Pipa**, with its immense, vaulting cliffs, among the very best of what the Northeast coast has to offer. There are also some specialized ecological and adventure travel options inland (see *Travel Services*, below, for suggestions).

Weather is generally good – the average temperature is 79°F/26°C, and the water temperature is 81°F/27°C.

How to Get Here

For those arriving by car from João Pessoa, Natal is at the northernmost end of the Brazilian coastal Highway BR 101, 108 miles/180 km to the south oF Recife. The **Augusto Severo International Airport** is well served, although you may have to take a connecting flight from Recife or another city to get there, as most of the flights, and all of the charters, originate from Europe. The airport is located on BR-101 at the 15 Km marker, in the town of Parnamirim. You should take a taxi from the airport.

Getting Around

High season is from July to October, when rooms fill up and prices rise; low season is from May to June. Natal has a good public transport system and lots of foreign travelers use the bus to save money, but it can be crowded. A taxi from Ponta Negra to downtown will cost about $10-15. All hotels have a taxi stand in front. The streets downtown in the so-called "tourist corridor" were designed by an Italian architect in the 1940s. With wide streets and rare urban planning for Brazil, the city has grown in an organized way, making it easy to park and get around on the well-paved roads, so renting a car is a good option.

For More Information

The state tourist board has a website with photos and info in English: **www.setur.rn.gov**. There is a great little booklet called ***Guia Natal***, which lists local outings and useful telephone numbers. It is distributed free – ask at the airport or at your hotel. Local power supply is 220 volts, so you may need a power adapter.

Travel Services

Lajedo de Soledade

A good travel guide is **Manaury Ecotours**. Because Natal is centrally located in the Northeast, Manaury has a lot of options for ecological and adventure tourism in the entire region, such as the Dinosaur Valley in Paraíba or the Serra de Capivara in southern Piauí. They have Land Rovers with air-conditioning to get you there. Contact them at Rua Francisco Gurgel, 9067 (☎ 84-219-2900).

From Natal there are a lot of specialized options for travel to destinations not listed in this chapter such as inland to the Sertão (desert) at **Lajedo de Soledade**, where you can see ancient cave paintings, adventure trips such as rock climbing, or visits in Jeeps to beach towns all along the coast of the state or even onward to Ceará. Check out the Setur website (see above) for a list of other travel operators in Natal, with links.

Festivals & Events

In December thousands of tourists come to the **Carnatal** festival, which is an off-season Carnival called a "micareta" with trios elétricos (see *Carnival* in Bahi for more on the trios) and famous Brazilian singers blaring out samba, reggae, drum beats and the Bahian musical style called Axé.

Safety Tips

The sun can shine for up to 15 hours per day and is very strong, so use adequate protection if you are prone to sunburn. The city is well policed and has a strong military presence to this day, which tends to make it one of the safest international travel spots in Brazil, but you do have to watch out for snatchings on the beach and around the city. This is really just theft of opportunity and at rates much lower than the rest of the country. Second only to João Pessoa, Natal is the safest city in the Northeast Region. It has the visible seediness of the boardwalk areas common in the Northeastern cities and tourist zones. Unescorted males are likely to be approached by prostitutes in areas like Ponta Negra or Praia dos Artistas. This is a legal activity, but the nicer resorts and inns are very careful about propriety and you don't see too much of it there.

DUNE BUGGIES & ECOLOGY IN BRAZIL

Dunes are eroding in parts of Brazil due to heavy overland traffic by dune buggies, the popular off-road vehicles frequently used to traverse remote locales. The dune buggy, or *bugre*, has a bad reputation in some parts of the region because of its effects on the environment, and even the disappearance of some dunes. The dunes themselves are migratory hills of sand, sensitive to wind and rain, but especially susceptible to the constant use by locals and tourists in the region. Rio Grande do Norte and Natal have strict laws on the use of buggies, such as licensing for drivers and special training for safety and fun in specified areas dedicated to the sport. Over the desert and dunes of the region, you can also take an air-conditioned 4X4 pickup or Jeep all the way from Natal to Jericoacoara, in Ceará state, and there you will have a chance to see some remote and spectacular regions. Even the big dune at Ponta Negra is technically off-limits but there are dune-surfers around.

Sightseeing

There is interesting architecture in Natal along the so-called “tourist corridor” – which has been spiffed up with urban beautification projects.

Rei Magos Fortress

The **Rei Magos Fortress**, at Avenida Pte Café Filho (Praia do Forte), is a national historic landmark and the most famous structure in the city. It was built starting in 1598 and later stormed by the Dutch in 1633, who lost it again to the Portuguese for good in 1654. It is shaped like a five-pointed star. There are guided visits daily from 8 am-4:30 pm. The scenery looking out on the reefs is very beautiful. ☎ 84-211-4959.

★The **Aquário Natural** aquarium, at Avenida Litorânea, 1099 (in Redinha Nova), has 60 kinds of marine animals, including sharks. Open daily from 8 am-6 pm. ☎ 84-224-2177. There is an entrance fee of about three dollars.

You can have a great photo op at sunset at the mouth of the Potengi River. There is a scenic overlook called **Pedra do Rosario**.

★The **Centro de Turismo** (“tourism center”), once a prison, has been converted into a cultural center with shops, art galleries and a restaurant serving regional cuisine. On Thursdays starting 10 pm there is “Forró com Turista,” a dance night that is a lot of fun and draws plenty of locals. At Rua Aderbal de Figueiredo, 980, in Petrópolis. ☎ 84-211-6149.

Adventures in the Dunes

Ecological Park

★★**Parque das Dunas** national dune park is one of the last preserved areas of natural wildlife in the state. One of the largest urban parks in

Brazil, it has trails and light walks through the dunes and local remnants of the Atlantic rainforest. Open 8 am-6 pm Tuesday through Sunday, with guided visits. There is a nice track for a morning run. The park is at Bosque dos Namorados on Avenida Alexandrino de Alencar in Tiro. ☎ 84-201-3985.

★Dune Buggy Rides

Rio Grande do Norte claims the highest and baddest sand dunes in the Northeast. Local authorities at checkpoints crack down on unskilled drivers who gave the sport a bad name and today bugueiros, as drivers are known, will ask if you want the ride *com emocão* (with emotion) or *sem emocão* (no emotion). The nearly vertical drop is mostly optical illusion, so the emotion depends on the passenger, but racing down the dunes is pretty cool. Buggies seat four.

Your best option is either a flexible day rate, preferably leaving your hotel after breakfast and returning in the afternoon, or just a couple hours if you have a specific trip in mind. You could even take a four-day trip along the coast from Natal to Fortaleza, taking in almost 100 different beaches and exploring the isolated fishing villages. Expect to pay about $100 per day for the trip, not counting meals. Virtually every hotel has suggestions for bugueiros, or simply contact Setur (see *For More Information*, above).

Adventures on the Water

★★Beaches

Morro da Careca

Natal is best known for its beaches. The most famous is **Ponta Negra**, a former fishing village about eight/14 km south of downtown. Once a rustic hideaway, today the beach is lined by shops and restaurants, with any number of street merchants hawking their wares on the boardwalk along the avenues Erivan França and Eng Roberto Freire. It gets crowded on summer weekends. The huge white dune with dark vegetation is called **Morro da Careca** – you may see locals "dune surfing," but this is supposedly prohibited for environmental reasons. The main access is the **Via Costeira**, also called **Senador Dinarte Mariz**. Ponta Negra has several dozen hotels and pousadas, all generally upscale. The nicer ones, though, are along the

Via Costeira beach, which is more secluded, with very good security provided by the expensive hotels and resorts. In town, the beaches of Praia do Forte, Praia do Meio, Praia dos Artistas, and Praia de Areia Preta link the section from Rei Magos Fortress all the way to the Mae Luisa Lighthouse. In between the fortress and Praia dos Artistas are natural reefs, and along the boardwalk you can find a number of bars, restaurants and nightclubs, some rather seedy. Be careful on the boardwalk and especially on the streets farther in from the beach because the risk of assault.

Boat Excursions

Marina Badauê has boat excursions along the gorgeous southern coast, with the warm emerald waters and natural pools of the Pirangi region. This is a good option for sightseeing and snorkeling. www.marinabadauê.com.br, ☎ 84-283-2066.

Kitesurfing

There are good conditions for kitesurfing in Natal at Ponta Negra. Ricardo Cardoso is an instructor and coordinator at **Kitecenter Natal**, who can provide lessons and equipment rentals. He is at Rua Francisco Gurgel 9100, or get in touch at ricardokite@ig.com.br, ☎ 84-238-2312 or 84-9987-9399).

Where to Eat

Natal has some good restaurants. The most typical regional dish is dried sun-beef, or *carne do sol*, which is served in a number of ways, including diced, with fried manioc and melted butter, or recheado, filled with melted cheese. You can also find plenty of shrimp (*camarão*) cooked in a variety of ways – Rio Grande do Norte is the largest shrimp producer in Brazil.

Camarões

★**Camarões** ($$$) has delicious shrimp and seafood. There are two: the one at Rua Pedro Fonseca Filho, 8887, in Ponta Negra, is a little newer and has a great view, but the food is also good nearby at Avenida Engenheiro Roberto Freire, 2610, in Ponta Negra (☎ 84-219-2424).

Tábua de Carne ($$$) serves regional cuisine. Try the one on Avenida Senador Dinarte Mariz, 229, on the Via Costeira near the swank resorts (☎ 84-202-5838). There is another at Avenida Engenheiro Roberto Freire, 3241, in Capim Macio, the neighborhood more or less in the region between the airport and Ponta Negra (☎ 84-642-1236).

Mangai ($$) has regional specialties at Avenida Amintas Barros, 3300, in Lagoa Nova. The self-service buffet has over 100 items, such as goat, mutton, cord beans, something called "snake's armpit" and other exotic choices – delicious! (☎ 84-206-3344).

Where to Stay

There is a sharp drop from the good to the bad hotels in Natal. Ponta Negra or the Via Costeira offer comfort and style but the prices can be a bit salted since most of the occupancy is pre-negotiated package tour business. In low season, you might ask for a bargain since there are plenty of resorts along the coast. Ponta Negra is where the nightlife and bars are, and in general the Via Costeira tends to be more secluded and secure. You have a lot of options about where to stay. The main attraction in Natal is the beach, and a resort, fine hotel or charming pousada is the perfect way to enjoy it.

The **Manary Praia Hotel** ($$$$) is a charming and tidy pousada with rooms decorated individually and with personalized service. The exclusive guest house is at Rua Francisco Gurgel, in a select corner of Ponta Negra. Prior reservations recommended. (www.manary.com.br, ☎ 84-219-2900).

The Manary Praia Hotel

The **Pestana Natal Beach Resort** ($$$$$) is a luxury resort, beautiful inside and out, on the Via Costeira. With three pools, beaches, restaurants, coffee bar and luxury services, the resort is close to the dunes park, at Avenida Senador Dinarte de Medeiros Mariz, 5525 (☎ 84-220-9800).

Another option is **Ocean Palace Hotel & Resort** ($$$$$) on the Via Costeira at Km 11. The luxury hotel and water park has hotel-style rooms or bungalows, tennis courts, volleyball, and a fitness center, very close to Ponta Negra. (www.oceanpalace.com.br, ☎ 84-219-4144).

The **Hotel Esmeralda** ($$$$) is at Ponta Negra on Rua Francisco Gurgel, 1160. This is the best value for fine resorts in Natal. (www.hotelesmeralda.com.br, ☎ 84-4005-5000).

Hotel Rifóles Praia

Hotel Rifóles Praia ($$$), in Ponta Negra at Rua Coronel Inacio Vale, 8847, is good and less expensive. (☎ 84-646-5000, www.rifoles.com.br).

For a cheaper one in Ponta Negra, try the **Pousada Castanheira** ($$) at Rua da Praia, 221. (☎ 84-236-2918, www.pousadacastanheira.com.br).

What to Buy

Rio Grande do Norte has an upscale side to its local artisanship, but there are plenty of local handmade goods to buy for low prices, similar to what you find elsewhere in the Northeast region. Best bargains are on lacework (which can cost several hundred dollars, including exotic varieties made from coconut fibers), embroidery or woven hammocks and blankets in bright colors. Here you can also find good deals on clay pottery in various colors and styles, basically black (massapé), yellow (tauá), or white (caulim). There are also curiosities made out of leather, wood and stone, or clever sand paintings in glass bottles. Take a bag of tasty cashew nuts home with you – these you can buy at the airport or around town.

The **Centro de Turismo** has 36 shops with typical handicrafts, an art gallery, and the Forró com Turista dancing and entertainment event every Thursday night. Rua Aderbal Figueiredo, 980, in Petrópolis (☎ 84 211-6149).

Another option is **Centro de Artesanato** at Praia dos Artistas, with about 60 different tiny shops mostly selling the same things at decent prices. Rua Café Filho, 1160 (☎ 84-202-3381).

For fine arts **Artepeixoto Atelier** is a regional art workshop that offers free pick-up service to and from your hotel, with paintings, sculpture, literature and music by locals. It is at Rua das Algas, 2219 (conjunto Algamar) in Ponta Negra (☎ 84-9412-6636 or 84-219-2854).

Another upscale establishment is **Manga Brasil Artesenato**, at Avenida Erivan França, 901, in the Gorbea Shopping in Ponta Negra. They have hand-made, intriguing and tasteful designs in pottery and sculpture (☎ 84-219-0183).

Side-Trips

★★★Southern Coast (Tibau do Sul & Pipa)

Aerial view of the Cajueiro de Pirangi

By car the coastal Highway BR 101 leads to the largest cashew tree in the world, the **Cajueiro de Pirangi**. Local Highway RN 063 also leads to Estrada de Pirangi, 13 miles/21 km south of Ponta Negra. This single sprawling tree is the size of a park and produces 60,000 fruits per year. The cashew fruit, if you haven't tried it, is tart and extremely juicy. There is a gift shop here as well. Open for visits 8 am-5:30 pm. The roads are in good condition and driving is not difficult.

Búzios is less than a half-hour by car from Natal. Some stretches of the beaches here have coral reefs for snorkeling at the right tides. There are popular surfing beaches along this coast and on its neighbors, Tabatinga, Camurupim, Barreta and Malemba.

On the delta of the Rio Doce you can crack open a fresh crab for a snack or drink a green coconut over the dunes and try the dark, mineralized waters of the inland lagoons, but more awaits you farther south. If you stop to eat, try **Arituba's Petiscos** ($) on Arituba Lagoon, serving shrimp, fried fish, lobster and drinks on the shore of the lagoon (☎ 84-230-2252).

Tibau do Sul

The best destination is **Tibau do Sul**, considered one of the most exotic and wild beaches of Brazil. Its gorgeous cliffs and quiet, rustic pousadas maintain their idyllic beauty year-round.

Surfers began migrating to the remote beaches in the 1980s. Today, it has grown into a sophisticated and relaxing resort with excellent lodging and cuisine.

You can still hire a dune buggy or Jeep for some off-road exploration on the dunes, or enjoy the strikingly beautiful ruddy coastline with its sharp cliffs and deserted beaches, bathed by an equatorial turquoise that sparkles with life.

The dunes and the mangroves of the Atlantic rainforest can be explored by Jeep, on horseback or on foot. Choose your safari.

For a local travel guide, contact **Pipa Tour Ecoturismo**. They can help with air travel arrangements, buggies, kayaks, horseback riding and boat excursions. Their address is Avenida Baía dos Golfinhos 767 (Galeria das Cores Loja 3) in Pipa. ☎ 84-246-2234 or 84-246-2346, www.pipatour.com.br.

It is probably more enjoyable to explore the mangroves by kayak (rentals ☎ 84-9979-5625) when the tide permits, but you can also take a sightseeing motorboat cruise (☎ 84-502-2323) over the Guarairas Lagoon. Both are available at reasonable prices.

The region called **Tibau do Sul** includes the beaches of Madeiro, Amor and Sibauma, but Pipa is the largest and best-known. Many of the beaches of the coast are in nearly pristine state but plenty of places to stay have been built in this tranquil strip of coast. The architecture tends to fit in with the surroundings, rather than leaping out at you as in parts of Bahia.

Wildlife includes dolphins that migrate over the ocean, sea-turtles, and dozens of birds. For dolphin viewing, you can take a boat to Ponta do Madeiro.

Pipa, 48 miles/80 km south of Natal (or 33 miles/55 km by buggy on the beach with a professional driver) is a Eurocentric resort town that is highly recommended. The pousadas and resorts are spread out but the nightlife tends to accumulate near the center of town, where there are a few bars. The place gets its name, pipa, or "kite," from a supposedly kite-shaped rock formation in the area.

An interesting and cheap sightseeing option is the **Pipa Ecological Sanctuary** (Santuário Ecológico de Pipa), a privately stewarded environmental protection area with a dozen well marked trails in the Atlantic rainforest. There are scenic overlooks for dolphin spotting at the 2 km mark of the Estrada Tibau do Sul. ☎ 84-982-8044.

If you are only going for one day, the day-use resort, **Ponta do Pirambu**, in Tibau do Sul, might be the way to go, with a good lunch, swimming pool, private beach, and massage. Credit cards not accepted. ☎ 84-246-4333.

The nightlife is hot in Pipa, where the restaurants are held to an international standard and the specialty is seafood. Swedish, Portuguese, Italian and French are the most common languages at the "international" bars, while some of the hotels are also very European. There are also a lot of wealthy Brazilians from all over the country.

For a cab **Pipa Taxi** has 24-hour service (☎ 84-9431-4490).

Dollars, euros and local currency are all accepted at most establishments, though you can only change cash at an authorized money changer in Natal. Your hotel might help but the exchange rates won't necessarily be great. Not all places accept credit cards and traveler's checks are usually not accepted.

In Pipa, for Italian, try **Al Buchetto** at Avenida dos Golfinhos in Pipa, with fresh pasta. They open for lunch and dinner (☎ 84-246-2318). For seafood, you can try the **Marupiara**, on the waterfront of the Estrada Tibau do Sul in Pipa.

Camamo Beijupira ($$$$) has a fine seafood dinner by reservation. They are along a torch-lit path on the banks of the Guarairas Lagoon in Tibau do Sul, at the 3 Km mark of State Highway RN-003. ☎ 84-246-4195.

There are two French restaurants. **Chez Liz** ($), at Avenida Baía dos Golfinhos, serves cheap and tasty shrimp or crab soups (☎ 84-9973-7630) for cash only and **La Provence** ($$) is in an informal garden at Rua da Gamaleira (☎ 84-246-2280). They accept credit cards.

During the day, besides just hanging out at the beaches in the region, you can take a Jeep or horseback trek along the coast. If you plan to stay more than a day or two, having a rental car is a definite advantage so you can explore the surrounding region.

If there is one spot perfect for a honeymoon or simple getaway, a chalet at the **Toca de Coruja** pousada in Pipa is perhaps the number one suggestion in Brazil. Simply delightful, with privacy and careful attention to detail, the inn is elegant and comfortable. There are sensuous luxuries such as individual antique beds heaped with Egyptian cotton and romantic baths. Note that August is a busy month so make your reservations well in advance.

On your way into Tibau, the **Pousada Ponto do Madeiro**, with comfortable apartments and suites, plus horseback riding, is a fine place to stay.

Toca de Coruja

If you want to travel farther south, you can contract buggy drivers (☎ 84-244-2222) to take you to the isolated **Baía Formosa** region – a rustic paradise for surfers and nature lovers. The region is halfway between Natal and João Pessoa (54 miles/ 90 km from each city) on BR 101.

The beach called **Praia de Sagi** on the border has a stunning view of the **Estrela Forest Reserve**, where there are monkeys, marmosets and other wildlife of the tropical rainforest. And you can dip your feet in the Rio Guaju that divides the states. If you are lucky you might spot a manatee.

At **Sagi** you can find refreshments at the **Ombak Bar** ($), which serves shrimp, oysters and fish broth, as well as a few dozen sugar-cane liquors famous in Brazil – elsewhere called cachaça, here called pinga. ☎ 84-244-5024.

Marmoset
(M. Werner)

If you opt to stay here, there is a great guest house called **Pousada Vila Bonita**, on Rua Francisco F. Freire, 361, with a seaside view, pool and other amenities. Credit cards accepted. ☎ 84-244-2056 or 84-244-2310.

If you continue south, you will reach the Northern Coast of Paraíba.

★★Northern Coast (Genipabu)

The wilder Northern Coast has a sophisticated resort at **Genipabu**, but if you prefer you can even travel by camel train over the dunes. Not unlike Pipa, Genipabu is best known for its white dunes and incredible beaches. The best way to get to know the region is by dune buggy, but you can also kayak on local lakes such as Lagoa de Pitangui or take in the scenery at the mysterious Genipabu lagoon.

The beach is best explored, however, by dromedary.

Genipabu is 15 miles/25 km from Natal by car. The easiest way to get there is take the coastal road from Natal to the ferry boat (“balsa”) at the launch point of Redinha. They will take your car to the other side of the Rio Potengi.

An alternative is RN-203, but it will take longer. If you plan is to head far northwest to the coast, you are better off taking BR 101 to Touros.

There are some other beaches a little farther north, such as **Pitangui**, where you can leap from a trapeze over the dunes into the water. If that's crowded, head to **Jacumã** with its freshwater lagoon. Just a few miles away, at **Muriu**, you can catch a boat to the natural tide pools of the region for snorkeling. They have can have sensational visibility.

Genipabu

If you head up the coast a bit farther, 32 miles/54 km from Natal is **Maracajau** beach, in the town called **Maxaranguape**, with exotic coral formations off the coast. Here it is quite a bit more rustic, but the transparent waters are easily explored if you go snorkeling amid the corals. You can rent the typical sloop of the region called a jangada for a view of the coast. Or take a motorboat, catamaran or buggy to the exotic oasis of **Cabo de São Roque**, with palm groves over the white sand and bluffs hanging over the crooked coastline.

One way, and maybe the simplest, is to take a dune buggy from **Genipabu** up the beach. It is possible to spend several days on a beach trek from Natal, heading up the wild coast to Fortaleza. For most travelers, Genipabu alone is probably enough reason to explore the northern coast, as it's only 12 miles/20 km from Natal.

To eat in Maracajau, try the **Sinfonia do Camarão** ($$) at Ma-Noa Parque for seafood, especially regional fish, lobster and shrimp à la carte or on Sundays with a buffet (☎ 84-9987-6747 or 84-234-9321). The **Aquarium** ($$) nearby also serves seafood (☎ 84-261-6200).

If you opt to go as far as **Touros** and **Perobas**, 53 miles/88 km north of Natal, there is a fishing village nestled in the coconut groves where you can rent a jangada or see them at work on the coast. Credit cards are generally not accepted here.

The region has a huge lighthouse called the **Farol do Calcanhar**. There are 296 steps to the top for a rewarding snapshot. Visits are on Sunday from 2 to 5 pm only.

At Perobas beach you can hire a boat to snorkel the marine wildlife preserve and the coral reef teeming with fish about three miles/five km off the beach. ☎ 84-693-3000, www.praiadeperobas.com.br.

There is a bed & breakfast pousada with partial sea view called **Sinos do Vento** ($$) on Praia das Garças, where credit cards are accepted (Visa and Amex). ☎ 84-263-2353 or 84-9989-4767. Or try **Polo das Águas** ($), which does not accept credit cards, at Praia de Perobas, but is only 30 paces from the ocean. ☎ 84-693-3000. Both have restaurants. At the "tourist terminal," pizza is sold at a place called **Brotinho**, ☎ 84-9966-5849.

A bit farther on is **São Miguel do Gostoso**, already now on the east-west coast. Locals claim this is the site of the Portuguese explorer Pedro Alvares Cabral's historic landing in 1501. The beaches are virtually untouched, with vast white sands and sky billowing with clouds against the tropical azure sky. This is a popular region for windsurfing, kitesurfing, and sailing.

The Upper Northeast

Ceará

Ceará coast

(L. Coelho)

Ranking fourth among the main Northeastern states for tourism, Ceará, to the west of Rio Grande do Norte, draws people from around the world. The capital city, **Fortaleza**, is one of the larger cities in the Northeast and offers a few interesting things to see. But if you've come this far you should go on to the remote destinations of the coast, where the scent of ocean or the shrimp workers hauling in the morning's net in the traditional way makes Ceará what it is.

Top destinations like **Jericoacoara** have changed from a decade ago when this backroad Brazilian coastal fishing community was written up in the foreign press and suddenly turned into a hip place for hip young expatriates. Today it is all about package tours and there are even a few fine resorts. The dunes and haunting dry mangroves, rare albino seahorses, or the watchful desert owls are still there, though the dunes along the coast are showing a bit of wear and tear. "Jeri" has given itself a commercial makeover and no longer looks the same, but it remains far enough away from civilization that the surrounding attractions keep their charms intact. The sunsets on this stretch of coast can be staggering seen from the dunes.

While not recommended for more than an overnight, Fortaleza, the capital, is an active Latin American metropolis with a penchant for forró, the northeastern musical style, and some restaurants in the city are good places for the region's specialty: lobster.

There are adventures that combine attractions in these states so check with outfitters in João Pessoa or Natal for wider options. Adventure sports in the badlands to the south of Fortaleza are starting to develop, such as canyoning, rappel, hiking, climbing, hang gliding and other ways to get an adrenaline rush.

Fortaleza

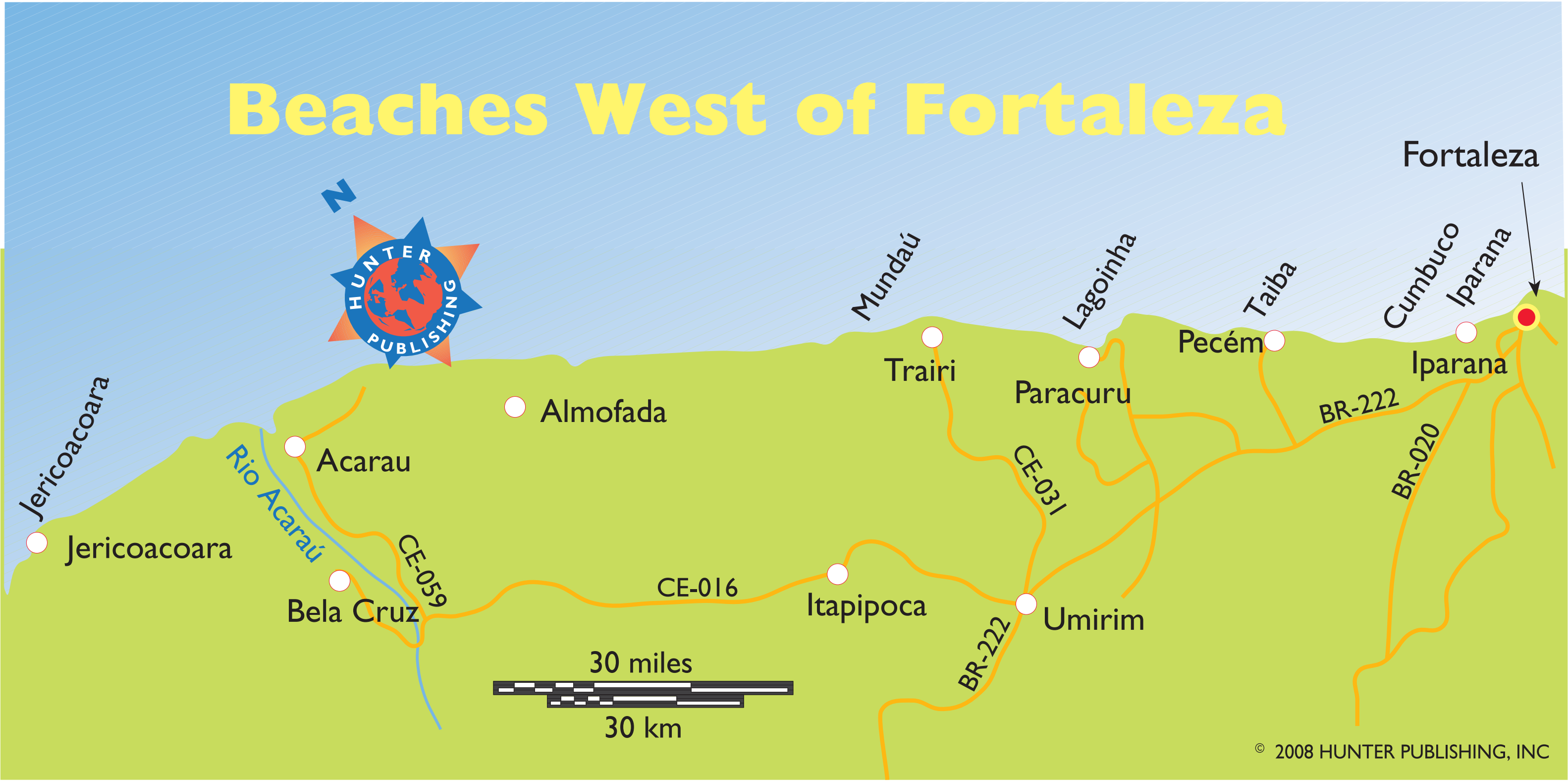
- Dance Forró at Piratas on Monday nights
- The jumping-off point for Jericoacoara
- Visit the Dragon Center or the Water Park

Fortaleza, the fortress city, is worth checking out, though you may only want to stay a night on your way to the coast or inland to the *cairi* desert scrublands. Here you can find new climbing destinations being developed and trips to waterfalls for rafting or canyoning and rappelling. Fortaleza is proud of its nightlife, especially the **Pirata** forró club, famous world-wide for the "craziest Monday night in Brazil." During the day the best bets are the Dragon Center or the beaches. This pretty and modern town, while popular to visit, is not the best destination in the Northeast, as the quality of services is mediocre and safety can be a problem. Even so, for adventurous travelers there is plenty to see and do. The Colonial settlement was founded in 1611, after several attempts to occupy this difficult region starting in 1603. The remote area had little to offer the Portuguese colonies in the way of natural resources, and what it did produce was subject to constant raids by French and Dutch pirates. Remaining largely under control of indigenous groups for many years and dependent on neighboring colonies, by 1823 the main settlement in the province had grown to the point where it was declared a city, called Fortaleza de Nova Bragança. The original fortress was made of wood, not stone, and none of it remains. What you will find are numerous highrises bordering a scenic coastline.

Safety Tips

The Fortazela boardwalk has a fairly sleazy mix of sidewalk swindlers, prostitutes, and oddballs, but its busy bazaar atmosphere lets you wander to find great bargains on hand-made goods, or you can pay double for cheap rip-offs. Don't count on the hawkers to tell you which is which. Observe normal precautions against pickpockets and stay close

Beaches West of Fortaleza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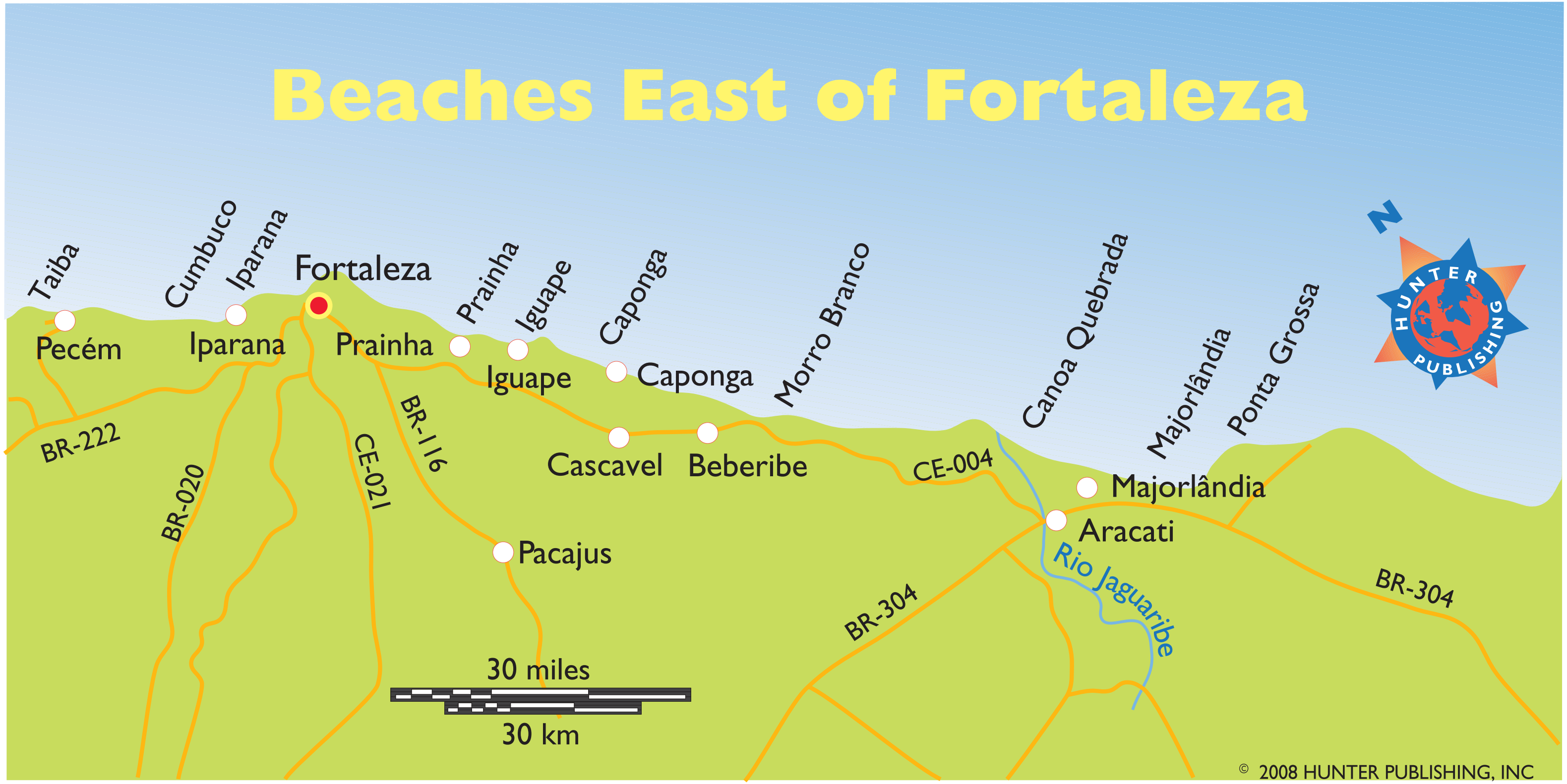
Beaches East of Fortaleza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to the busy, well lit areas – there are police stationed all up and down the boardwalk. The place called Praia do Futuro is considered especially dangerous at night.

How to Get Here

Fortaleza is served by major international airlines and regional flights from other capitals. You can also get there by bus or car from major cities in the Northeast, but the distance can be an inconvenience. Fortaleza is also a port of call for cruise ships.

For More Information

State tour board **Setur** has a toll-free tourist hotline for information (☎ 0800-991-516).

★★Forró Dancing

Piratas Café is the top spot in the region on Mondays for live dancing. This famous house provides a swashbuckling pirate doo-rag for all comers and draws a crowd. The party is accepting of tourists and locals alike but be on your guard if traveling alone as this is a city not necessarily known for its moral fiber. The club is on Rua dos Tabajaras, 325. You feel as if you're on your way to a smuggler's shindig, with gargantuan music, ridiculous amounts of liquor and people having fun. Nearby, there are shops and bars and you can walk out on the pier to cool off. It's a good reason to program your stay for a Monday in Fortaleza. ☎ 85-219-8030.

★Planetarium

The **Sea Dragon Cultural Center** opened in 1999 with a collection of local artifacts and artwork. The center has two museums, a theater, a book store and snack bar. On Rua Dragão do Mar, 81. Open Monday through Thursday 10 am-6 pm and Friday to Sunday 2-10 pm. It's a worthwhile day program.

Adventures on the Water

Beaches

★**Beach Park** is billed as one of the largest water parks in the Americas with a fully integrated resort offering fun for adults as well as kids. Their site is about 16km outside the city. Any taxi driver can take you. Open 11 am-5 pm, and it costs about $35 to get in. www.beachpark.com.br.

Diving

The water off this portion of the northeastern coast is around 82°F/27°C on average and for most dives a wetsuit is unnecessary, but there is a thermocline on deeper dives during parts of the year where the water turns colder.

The attraction here is the warm water and the corals. There are five principal dive points, and a WWII shipwreck you can enter with cord descent. Visibility is not great but it tends to clear up at greater depths. Best visibility is at 50-65 feet/15-20 m, from February to April, when the rains help keep the water clear. The sea floor is mostly silt and mud and on shallower dives visibility can be virtually zero. There is a lot of swell in the entire region too and, with some of the sites 10 miles from shore, you might want to take precautions against seasickness. Notable sea life includes corals and sponges.

Warning: there is a dangerous marine animal called a stone fish here. It can be hard to see and has poisonous spines.

Manta Diving is an internationally certified, multi-lingual dive operator. It has high quality equipment and is in fact the only option for recreational dive services in the city. Their 550 hp 12 m converted fishing trawler is slower than a catamaran but stable in the chop, with oxygen on board, a fish finder, and GPS navigation. There are soft drinks on board and they will even pick you up and drop you off at the hotel after your dive for free. Xéu runs the show, but there are several dive masters. Located at Rua Osvaldo Cruz, 2453. ☎ 85-3264-4114.

Side-Trips

Ubajara National Park

The Ubajara National Park is the location of the notable **Ubajara Grotto**. It is said to be the smallest national park in Brazil. There are two ways up – by foot or by cable car. The 2.2-mile/3½-km hike takes a few hours, with a guide. In addition to wildlife spotting opportunities, you can see the caves, swim in a freshwater pool or the waterfall of Cafundó on the same trip. The cable car offers a panoramic view of the forest canopy at a maximum height of 1,400 feet/426 m over the forest floor. Along the way you will see four waterfalls, sandstone rock formations and grottoes. Bordering on the state of Piaui, the green valleys of this humid plateau bloom with bromeliads and muskwood stands, guava groves and palm forests. Generally in the lower altitude regions, this is the Caatinga, the wild badlands of the Northeast Region's interior. It is fertile country despite the transition from desert to rainforest. Nearby are caves with spectacular rock formations.

Cable cars over Ubajara

(Courtesy Ceará Tourism Authority)

The park is open Tuesday through Sunday and the cable car runs 8 am-4 pm, with the park closing one hour later. By car from Fortaleza it takes about six hours – take BR 222 to Tiangua then CE-187 some 11 miles/18 km until you reach the park gate. You can also get here from Teresina, in Piaui, by taking BR 143 to Piripiri, then BR 222 to Tiangua. Buses and travel services are available in Fortaleza. The land of this westernmost portion of the state is forbidding to the outsider, with eroded rock spires protruding from grey walls and cracks in the earth. Contact guides in Fortaleza.

Beberibe: A Labyrinth of Sandstone Walls

Canoa Quebrada
(P. Villar)

This region is around the area of **Canoa Quebrada**, east of Fortaleza and toward Rio Grande do Norte. The city of Beberibe, about 54 miles/90 km on State Highway CE 040, has eerie sand canyon labyrinths that lead to the sea. These colorful canyons of baked sand are called "*falesias,*" and are typical of the region all the way around the coast to Paraíba. What makes this different is the famous deposit of colored sands, where local artists have developed refined techniques for sand painting in bottles. There is also great pride in the cotton lace, which is produced here as a Cearense tradition. Canoa Quebrada was a hippie hideaway during the 1970s when the forgotten fishing village was "discovered" by leisure seekers. It remains very rustic. Here you can rent a buggy or a jangada sloop if you want or visit the weird natural sand sculptures of the Garganta do Diablo (devil's throat) badlands.

Where to Eat

In addition to typical Northeastern cuisine, such as *carne-de-sol* and *baião-de-dois*, in Fortaleza you can also enjoy fresh seafood. Try **Colher de Pau** ($), a simple place in the Varjota neighborhood that is famous for its traditional food at Rua Frederico Borges, 204. Another good one in Varjota is **Cantinho do Faustino** ($$), a little more expensive but still cheap, at Rua Delmiro Gouveia, 1520. There are plenty of other restaurants along the beach (Avenida Beira-Mar). At Iracema beach or Meireles beach, you can simply walk and select the one you like. For beef served all-you-can-eat Brazilian style, try **Spettus** ($$) at the Salinas Casa shopping mall on Avenida Washington Soares,

909. If you don't mind paying a bit more, try the **Nostradamus** ($$$), serving French cuisine, at Rua Joaquim Nabuco, 166, in Meireles. For seafood, try the upscale **Cemoara at Flat Saint Martin** ($$$) on Avenida Abolicao, 3340-A, in the Meireles neighborhood (wearing shorts here is not allowed).

Where to Stay

Going upscale is recommended in Fortaleza as the cheaper places tend to be run-down. The **Caesar Park** ($$$$) is a luxury hotel at Avenida Beira Mar, 3980 (at the Praia de Mucuripe). Their phone is ☎ 85-3466-5000. Another good option is **Blue Tree Towers** ($$$$), which is at the Praia de Iracema on Rua Atualpa Barbosa de Lima, 500 (☎ 85-4008-4008). Cheaper but still decent is **Hotel Beira Mar** ($$$) at Avenida Beira Mar, 3130 (☎ 85-3242-5000).

What to Buy

Probably the best-known local artistry is **lacework**, especially two kinds: "*labrinto*" or labyrinth lace, and "*renda*," also called bobbin-lace, brought by the Portuguese. Similar techniques are applied to lace-embroidered textiles. Some of the nicer pieces are fairly expensive (up to about $200 or so), compared to other popular arts sold in the Northeast, but they are worth it if you consider how much work and skill goes into making lace. Be careful buying on the street or you might walk away with machine-made nylon lace that is virtually worthless. Other good buys in Fortaleza are clay pottery, influenced by African styles, leather goods, woven straw baskets, and colorful woven textiles such as hammocks or blankets.

The **Centro de Turismo** is a former jail from the 1800s that was converted into a center for selling local handicrafts, with a mineral museum and another for traditional arts. It is at Rua Senador Pompeu, 350, and open every day from 7 am to 6 pm (closes at noon on Sunday). There is a nominal fee to get in. Another good place to go is the state-sponsored **CEART**, which has shops at several locations. The most convenient is at Praia de Iracema, on Avenida Monsenhor Tabosa, 777 (☎ 85-219-0864).

Jericoacoara

- See the spectacular sunsets over the water from the dunes
- Visit rustic villages that still exist near this modern resort
- Enjoy dune buggies, windsurfing, or hanging out on the beach

When word got out in the international press during the 1980s, Jericoacoara turned famous almost overnight as foreign backpackers flocked to this new beach spot on the northernmost point of the Brazilian, a gleaming jewel in the dunes. Decades later this isolated fishing village has become a full-scale commercial resort, despite its reputation for rusticity. All that remains of the counterculture are a group of

relaxed Brazilian youths who wander there from all over the country, staying in the few low-end places here and selling crafts, smoking pot or hustling chess on the main plaza. The rustic pousadas that once barely had ceiling fans and hammocks today have air-conditioning and television. The more or less constant flow of tourists has ensured reasonably good service everywhere you go. Tourism is the main industry, but you can still see the villagers farming shrimp from shore in the mornings and, nearby there are towns even smaller than Jeri was when it was "discovered." You will be able to see local wildlife, including two kinds of owls and other birds of prey, shred some terrain on a dune buggy or sit under the palms sipping *caipirinhas*, the potent local drink. Jeri, despite its changes, remains a classic of Brazilian beach hangout and is definitely recommended if you don't mind the bumpy six-hour drive to get there.

How to Get Here

Getting here is either over the coast (an excellent off-road trek is possible starting from Natal). Or you can depart by 4X4 bus from Fortaleza. There are other options, such as renting space in an open-sided flatbed with crowded bench-like seating, but keep in the mind that the road has rough patches and in the rain you would be better off in the big bus. You can also get here by hiring space in someone's Jeep and pickup, or you can even take a buggy, which will cost up to $100. It's first-come, first-served so arrange for your bus-trip back as early as possible, even upon arrival at the bus stop in front of the **Casa de Turismo** on Rua das Dunas. The Redenção bus gets packed. From Fortaleza, get your ticket at the bus station (☎ 85-256-2100) for the Viacao Redencao (☎ 85-256-1973 or 85-256-2728). A better service is Jeri Off-Road – get in touch at jer@jeri.tur.br or ☎ 88-3669-2268 (in an emergency ☎ 88-9961-4167).

Getting Oriented

Jericoacoara has four parallel streets (ruas), each more or less in the direction of the beach. The first is **Rua das Dunas**, nearest to the dune where everybody goes for the sunset and where you can rent a buggy or a horse. Next, **Rua São Francisco** has bars, restaurants, bakeries, supermarkets and pousadas. The **Rua Principal** is where the Ibama wildlife protection agency is located, near photo shops, travel agencies, and a post office. Finally there is **Rua de Forró**, where there are restaurants, a telephone post, tour guides and at night the vigorous forró dancing that Jericoacoara is known for.

Tips for Enjoying Jericoacoara

Jericoacoara today has good services if you know where to look. The best time to go is from June to December, when rain is less of a problem.

Because of the long haul in, you should plan on two to four days here. This will give you enough time to explore the town, see the dunes, check out the beaches, ride a dune buggy through the *mangue seco* dry swamps, and get to know the local fishing communities and wildlife. The town is mainly a jumping-off point: you should make a point of exploring the surrounding terrain where the most amazing locations are.

Hiring a buggy (with or without a driver) at about $80 per day (less if you contract for a special trip) is a good investment. Drivers act as your guides and they can be very helpful. This is especially true when you are trying to get to some of the destinations in this chapter; you will be crossing over water on rickety ferries or heading along deserted beaches or over isolated dunes without any signposts or even clearly marked trails.

Prices can drop 40% outside the high-season rates of January through March and July to September. The bargain-hunting low season is April to June and you might get a discount in the December-September period.

Currency accepted in town is generally dollars, euros, travelers checks (though rarely), or credit cards. You really are better off drawing local currency at an ATM in Fortaleza rather than paying ridiculous local exchange rates when you arrive. Trading cash in town is recommended as a plan B – compare what your hotel offers you, then ask at Cantina Jeri, Restaurante Sabor da Terra, or Bar do Alexandre who will buy foreign currency.

These days there is even Internet access at a number of cyber cafés in town (on the Rua Principal).

It is fairly common here to see people discretely smoking joints outdoors, which is tolerated by local authorities. The bars at night nearly always draw a lively crowd for dancing. The crowd is friendly and very international with a strong Brazilian component. Be warned that cachaça can be potent in any of its forms.

Once upon a time there was a bad reputation here for a parasite that entered through the foot (most locals go barefoot) because of the pigs that used to roam freely. Now pigs are banned and the parasite is only reported about once a year. Wearing sandals is considered enough protection in communities near where pigs still roam free.

The only safety tip is to stick with the crowd coming back from the dunes after dusk. On a recent visit, a Canadian-Israeli duo stopped a camera snatching attempt. Locals said this sort of thing happens only a few times a year and tends to cause a big scandal. In this case, the snatcher was a local teenager who apparently had been involved in similar problems in the past.

Also in the recent past there have been reports of assaults on female travelers at night on the trail to Pedra Furada. The alleged perpetrator was caught, but caution in isolated places is always advised. You can greatly minimize your risks by staying in groups and hiring qualified services listed in this chapter.

Adventures on Foot

You can hike over the dunes using GPS, but the equatorial sun can be very strong. Make sure you have adequate sun protection for these Sahara-like foot tours. You will have good opportunities to see owls and other birds of prey, so definitely bring a camera. Nearby, the most famous attraction is **Pedra Furada**, easiest to reach first by buggy, then hiking the scenic trail. This sea-rock makes a large arch that you can enter in low tide. For a long trek, you can hike all the way from town to **Lagoa Azul**, but a guide is needed and you would probably want to hire a buggy on the return trip. Once you depart from Jeri there is practically no civilization for days of hiking, so use only qualified guides for extended treks and take precautions.

Pedra Furada

★★★Adventures by Buggy

The dunes surrounding Jericoacoara are one of the main attractions in the region, but you should ask your driver to respect the local laws because of the visible destruction of some of the dunes closer to town. The ever-changing sand dunes are the subject of myth and legend. Local folklore has it that a French investor was cheated by the previous landowner when he bought a homestead on the beach near town that was later swallowed by a dune.

The **Ruins of Tatajuba** is a former settlement that was buried in sand because of dune migrationt. The inhabitants had to move to another place, still called Tatajuba. All that remains of original village are a few walls poking up between the grasses and the sand. Any buggy driver can take you there. There is a shack here that sells green coconuts, but be careful – underfoot are small pigs who will make a grab for your coconut. The old woman who runs the place is one of the settlers who watched the sands overtake the town, forcing everyone eventually to move out. She will happily recite the story in Portuguese.

There are also ghost tales circulating here and you might hear someone tell you they heard a guitar out in the dunes, though nobody can be seen for miles around.

Another great trip is on the eerie **Mangue Seco** trail, which will take you along the coast. You will make a river crossing by ferry, and you can even help steer across with the long dried poles locals use for the purpose. Along the way you will get the chance to check out the exotic dried mangrove stands, called mangue seco, where shriveled dark twigs protrude from the sands. Nearby in the living mangroves, a local guide can show you seahorses, so bring a mask and snorkel. The seahorse trip takes an hour, from Praia de Guriu, near Mangue Seco, which is 10-15 minutes by buggy to the west. There are crabs of various kinds and the seahorses include an exceptionally rare albino variety.

The trip to and from Tatajuba village takes four or five hours and **Camocim** is a little farther (1½ hours by buggy). Here you will get a glimpse of functional but abandoned-looking fishing shacks and sometimes drying nets. Expect to pay about $100 per day for buggy, driver and fuel. Contact Magal (☎ 88-9928-8708), a nice fellow who has worked for 12 years as a bugreiro, or Kleber at ☎ 85-9983-6095.

Adventures on Horseback

You can go by horseback to many of the same destinations you would by buggy or on foot, such as Mangue Seco, Lagoa Azul or Pedra Furada. Ask at your lodging or at any of the various tour agencies in the villa.

★★Adventures on the Water

The region has distinctive freshwater lakes amid the dunes that are perfect for a relaxing side-trip, with places where you can sit under a thatch hut for a cold drink or snack. Lagoa Azul and Lagoa Paraiso are both worth a look.

Lagoa Azul, or blue lagoon, has a striking turquoise color that can change depending on the conditions of light. Almost like a mirage, on the island in the middle of the lake there is an oasis, with a shack selling crab or hamburgers, cold drinks and shrimp under grass huts – very refreshing after a long hike over the dunes. To get to the island simply wade through waist-deep water or summon a raft or jangada to take you for about a dollar. There you can rent kayaks for about $4 an hour, snorkels and masks, or even take a leisurely spin around the lake in the jangada. Swim the warm freshwater lake or sit under the shade of the hut amid the vivid white backdrop of dunes.

Lagoa Paraiso is a lesser-known gem of Jericoacoara, but also definitely recommended. The trick is getting here by buggy as it is a little out of the way. You can even stay here if you want at the peaceful and eclectic pousada **Chez Loran** ($$), which provides transport to and from town or even transportation to and from Fortaleza. Access to the freshwater lagoon is via the so-called "corrego de urubu" or vulture run. Here you can take out kayaks (a few dollars per hour for non-guests of the pousada) or rent a jangada to drift over the lagoon. The beach is also nice and you can buy refreshments at a good restaurant there.

Kitesurfing, Windsurfing & Surfing

For kitesurfing the best place is **Praia do Riacho Doce**. You can rent equipment or hire a trainer at **Rancho do Peixe** (the owner is the same as Vila Calango, so you can ask there too). You can also check at **Kite Club Praia**. For windsurfing, rent equipment at **Clube dos Ventos** (same owner as the Casa de Turismo where the buses disembark), **Vila Calango** (ask for Peter, an American), or at **Surfing Jeri**, a pousada on Rua São Francisco. For surfing, try **Praia da Malhada**. Ask in town about surf conditions when you are there but, because of the location on the equator, the periods of full moon almost always bring the best surf.

Nightlife

There are three clubs in town where the party moves around in the evening. Most weekends and during the week as well, there are parties on the beach near the main sand dune where everybody goes at sunset. The hotels and bars along the beach serve drinks and dinner through the cocktail hour, and this is your best bet for a *caipirinha*, the potent local drink, and pile of steaming garlic- and oil-fried shrimp ("*camarão*") from local waters, served with a lime slice.

Where to Eat

Good places to eat are **Tudo na Brasa**, with grilled meats and fish, **Espaço Aberto**, serving grilled meats, or **Pizza Nomade**, facing Hotel Mosquito Blue.

Where to Stay

The **Hotel Mosquito Blue** ($$$$) is the best place to stay in Jericoacoara, between Dunes Street and São Francisco. It has tasteful and discrete Spanish villas with suites on the beach, and a fine restaurant. ☎ 88-3669-2203.

Vila Calango ($$$) has ceiling fans, coffee bar and straw chairs in rustic style, at the main beach. ☎ 85-3669-2289.

Pousada Cabana ($$) is a cool grass-hut dune dwelling with a sauna, small rooms and a there are generally a lot of guests coming and going most of the time – this is good for meeting other travelers, but you might prefer elsewhere for more privacy. ☎ 85-3669-2294.

Pousada do Norte ($$) has a pool and air-conditioning, a good choice. On the Rua das Dunas. ☎ 85-3669-2373.

The **Pousada Casa de Turismo** ($$) is a good value, plus this is where the buses take off and land. At the Rua das Dunas. ☎ 85-3621-0211.

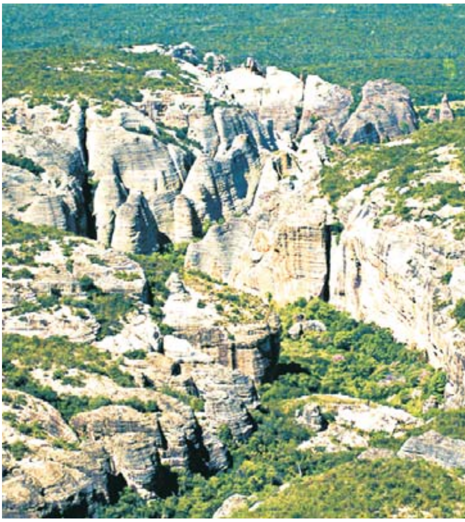
Chez Loran ($$) is a great option if you want a little extra peace away from the town. Not a lot of people know about it but it's definitely worth a look and there are kayaks and windsurfing on-site. At Rua Corrego do Urubu on the Lagoa do Paraiso. ☎ 88-3669-1195.

What to Buy

$ There is not much to buy in Jeri. You might check out some of the cheap necklaces and knick-knacks made by hippies at the main plaza, or explore the two or three T-shirt shops near the Rua Principal. You can get film and other routine articles easily in town.

Piaui

Exotic Piaui is one of the most destitute areas covered in this book but there are some stunning natural phenomena and rock paintings. One of the best known of these areas is called the Serra das Confusões park, located in the heart of the unique Brazilian desert-like zone called the Caatinga. If you are willing to put up with minor inconveniences along the way, and you like off-the-beaten-track places, this region is recommended. You might spend a day or two at the beaches of the Delta de Parnaiba, but the real treasures of the state are at the **Serra de Capivara** archeological site, the **Sete Cidades** national park and the **Serra das Confusões** region – virtually unknown, but an outstanding wilderness destination in the high desert. Piaui has produced numerous famous and contemporary artists, from the naïf musicians Posidonio de Queiroz, a self-taught chamber music maestro, to the rock group Totonho e os Cabra. In fact, the cultural life here in Piauí is one of the richest in the Northeast.



Serra de Capivara

(V. Cunha)

A maritime breeze brings cloud cover almost all the time, which keeps temperatures a bit cooler than the average for the region. Still, it can get very hot during much of the year. If you plan to travel during the hot months from around September through February, make sure you are adequately protected from the sun and that you have adequate footwear and equipment if you plan to do any climbing or camping. Outfitters can be contracted in Teresina, which is the capital city of Piaui. You can also arrange for a combined trip to see parts of neighboring states, Maranhão and Ceará.

Teresina

- Gateway to national parks with archeological sites
- Excellent opportunities to purchase creations from local artisans
- The Delta of Parnaiba, with its lakes and coastline

City of Teresína

Teresína is a stubborn enclave of hardscrabble dwellers at the rim of the Brazilian desert. This city of under one million people in the heart of the Sertão has a reputation for scalding temperatures (especially from June to November). Even the wind is hot and baleful. Find a place to relax in the shade for a cold beer and some cashew nuts, then plot your side-trip. If you have time to kill you might check out the **Palácio de Karnac**, the headquarters of the state government that was built as an estate home in 1890, with gardens by the esteemed Brazilian landscaper Burle Marx. This parched city between two rivers has only modest tourism options, other that soaking up the local culture, but you can inquire at the Piemtur state tour board center near the **Rio Poty** (see below) for sightseeing. The other river in town is the **Parnaíba**, which runs to the popular delta on the coast. You can find excellent wooden carvings and other art at the **Central de Artesanato Mestre Desinho**, a local sculptor and sacred artist. Afterwards you can check out the "**Rua Climatizada**," an experimental modernization project that sprinkles mist to provide relief from the heat in the afternoon.

There are a number of local intrigues here, such as the rift between the Johnny-com-lately Parnaibans on the coast and the original settlers at Teresina. It is commonly forgotten that Piaui even has a coast, even though it was originally claimed over 100 years ago. Teresina, by and large, runs the show in business and politics, while Parnaíba has its say over the beach.

How to Get Here

The Teresina airport is at Avenida Centenario, 3.6 miles/six km north of town. You can catch a flight from Brasília, Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo, Salvador and other cities in the Northeast, but flights change so check local listings. Overland might be an option if you plan to do an integrated tour of the Western states of the Northeast, or if you come from Paraiba or Rio Grande do Norte on a Jeep trek with a specific destination in mind. You can catch a bus from Fortaleza that takes about 10 hours or from São Luis in seven hours, or even Belém (see the *Amazonia* section) in about 15 hours. In all cases an air-conditioned sleeper is recommended. The Teresina bus station is on BR 343 3.6 miles/six km from town. You can always get a taxi at the bus station that can take you into town for under $10, with bags.

Tips for Enjoying Teresina

Air-conditioning (*ar condicionado*) may prove to be a very useful phrase here. There are several tour guides that can take you to the amazing natural wonders of this enchanting state. My recommendation in **Aldatur**, one of the largest and most established tour companies in the state. They are at Rua Lizandro Nogueira, 1384, in the Centro. E-mail them at reservas@aldatur.com.br or call ☎ 86-3221-3932.

For More Information

The local tour board, **Piemtur**, has an office open 8 am-6 pm Monday through Friday at the Centro de Artesenato. The Centro sells handmade goods from the entire state (see *What to Buy*, below). You can also get information at the Piemtur office at the airport, such as suggestions on where to stay and multilingual tour guides. Check out their website for photos and general information: www.piemtur.pi.gov.br.

What to Do

One sight in Teresina is the **Karnac Palace** on Avenida Antonio Freire, with planned gardens by Burle Marx, the renowned Brazilian landscaper. It used to house a significant art collection but a former governor absconded with the best pieces about two decades ago and it remains a minor architectural curiosity.

There is also a locally famous sculpture of a folk-character known as **gourd-head** (cabeça de cuia) shown in the act of devouring seven virgins – one of his legendary feats.

The **Piaui Museum** (Museu de Piaui) has exhibits on the local culture and history. It's on Praça da Bandeira and is open from 8 am-5 pm during the week and 8 am-noon on weekends. There's not much to see there but it might be worth a look.

See the grand junction of the Parnaiba and Poty rivers 4.2 miles/seven km from town. There is a restaurant here and a park area to check it out.

What to Buy

The **Centro de Artesanato** has good deals on lace, leather, ceramics, textiles, and jewels made from the curious local fire opals from Piaui's mines near the town of Pedro Segundo. The works here are distinctive and original. Among the items are intriguing wood sculptures of saints (this is a tradition that stems from early Colonial times when there were not always churches nearby and households had chapels or reliquaries for religious practice). You can also try sweets and liquors made from local fruits, or pick up a cheap bag of cashew nuts. The **Feira do Troca Troca** is a traditional street fair every day at the port of the Rio Parnaiba. Here locals come to buy, sell, and trade what they have (mostly used goods), and it's more a place to look around rather than to buy. The airport has some of the best arts and crafts at a still reasonable price, including bottles of the local non-alcoholic fruit drink *cajuina* to take home with you.

Where to Stay

The **Metropolitan Hotel** ($$) is one of the best in town, at Avenida Frei Serafim, 1696, downtown (☎ 86-3216-8000). Another is the **Rio Poty Hotel** ($$) at Avenida Marechal Castelo Branco, 555, in the Ilhotas neighborhood (☎ 86-3215-1500). A third good option is the **Luxor Piaui Hotel** ($$) at Praca Marachal Deodoro, 310, downtown (☎ 86-3221-4911).

Luxor Piaui Hotel

Where to Eat

Teresina's cooking traditions are similar to others in the Northeast, mixing indigenous and African flavors with Brazilian and Portuguese styles. Typically, the meals are heavy with sun-dried meat, called carne-do-sol, in its various forms, or goat, chicken, and different types of stews, beans, manioc (either fried or in flour form) and tropical fruits. For dessert, jenipabo fruit liquor is a regional specialty and don't miss sampling some of the homemade fruit sweets. Try *cajuina*, a refreshing drink (non-alcoholic) made from cashew fruit. The **Restaurante Carnauba** ($$) is at Avenida Joqui Clube, 1662, at the Joquei Clube. ☎ 86-3233-6829. Another one in the same neighborhood is **Restaurante Longa** ($), on Avenida Elias Joao Tajra, 1139, an outdoor place under a grass hut that is recommended for lunch. ☎ 86-3233-6868. For a more mainstream Brazilian-style churrascaria steakhouse, try the restaurant at the **Luxor Piaui Hotel** (see *Where to Stay*).

Side-Trips

Delta do Parnaíba

Ilha do Caju
(www.deltadorioparnaiba.com.br)

Parnaiba is the port town at the famed river delta with 70 different islands. The town is worth a visit, especially if you're heading west toward Maranhão. The Delta do Parnaiba is an open sea estuary with a huge chain of beaches, islands, dunes, and lagoons along the wild border with Maranhão. Here you will begin to see the igarapés, the typical Brazilian river passages that make labyrinths for kayaking or raft trips. You can take organized day-trips on boats around the delta from the restored old river delta port called **Porto das Barcas**, where there is also an art center and places to eat. From there you can go out to the **Ilha do Caju**, a day-use island nature sanctuary for about $20 including lunch, which is probably the best deal. The delta is a terrific area to poke around in on the cheap if you have plenty of time, though it really helps to speak a little Portuguese. The local dish is *charque*, a kind of dried beef.

Boat trips into the delta can be arranged with **Igaratur** and **Morais Brito Viagens Turismo** at the port.

To get here, you can take a bus from Teresina. It takes six hours and costs under $20. For lodging you can stay on the Ilha do Caju at the **Pousada Ecologica da Ilha do Caju** (☎ 86-3321-3044), which is four hours by boat from Parnaiba. At the inn you can enjoy horseback riding, or explore the delta by foot or raft. Note that this is a remote location and phone or power interruptions are frequent and there are only very limited services. In town there are some rustic mansion fronts and a Baroque church from 1770 called the **Igreja de São Benedito**.

Parque Nacional de Sete Cidades

Sete Cidades has fascinating naturally sculpted rock formations that resemble seven "cities." There is research and popular folklore that suggests these could have been sites of very early human occupation. The cave paintings are geometrical with fine lines in red paint (apparently oxidized iron), black and yellow. A hike through the park can take two or three hours, with swimming if you want at the "first city" in a natural spring. This area can be very hot, so it is a good idea to plan your trip

Sete Cidades
(www.naturturismo.com.br)

early in the day to escape the heat. At the park, you go by Jeep to the various formations, and maps are available at the IBAMA wildlife protection agency office, open 8 am-5 pm. They run the park and sell entry passes for a few dollars. Guides are mandatory!

One of the sites at the "fourth city" has a hole in a rock arch that resembles the map of Brazil (there is a similar one in Jericoacoara and in Fernando de Noronha). At the "fifth city" there are enigmatic runes allegedly inscribed by indigenous peoples in Pre-Colombian times, but perhaps as late as the 17th century by indigenous hunters and gatherers who lived here. The park is well-marked. Each site is interesting and you should be sure to take a camera!

The best time to come is the first part of the year when the rains fill pools and rivers. To get here, drive 108 miles/180 km from Teresina or take a bus from Teresina to Piripiri (about three hours), and from there a cab or the special IBAMA shuttle that leaves from Praca da Bandeira in Piripiri at 7 am, returning at 9 pm. Sometimes there is additional transport for hire or through IBAMA. The bus station at Piripiri is on Avenida Estado de Pernambuco, and there is a tourist support booth at Praca de Bandeira 148. A recommended place to stay and eat here is **Fazenda Sete Cidades** ($$) on BR 222 at the 63 km marker.

Serra da Capivara

The Serra da Capivara National Park in the south of Piaui shelters many prehistoric rock paintings and is considered a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. It also is in the Caatinga, offering some very good wildlife viewing opportunities. There are more than 300 sites that have been opened to visitors, with about 100 open at any one time. For the most up-to-date information, check with the Fundacao Museu do Homem Americano at Rua Abdias Neves, 551, in São Raimundo Nonato. From there it is about 18 miles/30 km to the park.

Serious archeology got underway here in the 1970s when there were a number of important fossils discovered of saber-toothed tigers and extinct giant sloths. Hunters and gatherers roamed here in early times. You can access cave paintings along decent roads. They show a remarkable diversity, but there is still a problem of theft of art or damage (from vandalism or carelessness) at these important sites. Excavations suggests there were people here at least 12,000 years ago and possibly even 50,000 years ago. Agriculture was not fully developed until about 3,500 years ago. There is an IBAMA park entry fee of a few dollars, allowing three days visitation. Buses run from Teresina to São Raimundo Nonato, but you are better off arranging visits with an outfitter in the capital for more expedient and comfortable transport arrangements. The best time to go is in the green season of the Caatinga. A place to stay here is **Pousada Serra da Capivara** ($), 18 miles/30 km from the park, with simple rooms and collective dormitories. There is a place for lunch called **Valda** ($), on Rua Antonio de Castro Marques, 303, that serves regional grub, such as chicken in brown sauce, here called *frango em molho pardo*.

Adventures in the Serra das Confusões

It is hard to believe that 60,000 years ago Serra das Confusões was a rainforest, but that's what they tell us. For at least 10,000 years it has been a desert though, and this is what you'll find now. The park is divided between the Maranhão plateau and Serra Grande sedimentary basin in the middle of Piaui. The region has the headwaters of the rivers São Francisco and Parnaiba, that later form the Piaui river, the most important in the state. Once inhabited by early humans, it has archeological sites and monolithic rock formations such as needle-spires poking out of the landscape, along with shaded walls of rock hiding sandy trails. You might see anteaters, deer or even jaguars at night. The rock paintings are similar to those at Serra de Capivara. As in the rest of the Caatinga, it can be hot during the day, around 79-83°F/26-28°C, and cool at night, 50-54°F/10-12°C. Getting here is still problematic because there is not much basic infrastructure, but you can come by car from Teresina or by bus once per week. There is a close-by town, **São Raimundo Nonato**, 69 miles/115 km away, as well as adjacent Caracol, but neither are very well equipped or serviced. The site is definitely fascinating and much of the desert is pristine, but you should really hire a guide in Teresina to simplify the trip.

Maranhão

Maranhão is the second-largest state in the Northeast but is still poorly developed. But it does have one of the most beautiful coastlines in all of Brazil. The Portuguese knew about the region as early as the 1500s but they were busy elsewhere and it was the French who in 1612 founded São Luís as the first definitive settlement by Europeans in the remote area. Today this farming state produces fruit and nuts for export, as well as local oilseeds that can be transformed into bio-diesel fuel and cattle feed. The French tried to take over the Amazonian trade routes but fled the foothold in São Luís that was their vital hook to the continent. The Portuguese moved in but soon lost the settlement to Dutch marauders, regaining it again after a war that lasted from 1641 to 1644. After driving out their rivals, the Portuguese transformed São Luís into a busy port, making heavy use of African and indigenous slave labor on sugar plantations, rice and cotton fields. There was a severe economic depression in the region following the crumble of the Brazilian Empire and the rise of the New Republic. Only today is the state slowly developing with the help of mineral production and tourism. The prime location here is the **Lençois Maranhenses National Park**. Blistering sun bakes the dunes and dark azure waters of semi-perpetual finger-lakes come and go with the winds and rain. These are a remarkable sight. But another good reason to come here is the amazing and diverse local culture.

São Luís

- Gateway to the Lençois Maranhenses
- Historic streets with rich architecture
- Unique cuisine and culture

The exotic island capital São Luís owes its origins to the French occupation on an island hill overlooking the Bay of São Marcos. Despite this original settlement, not much remains today of the French influence in the local historical architecture, considered a Heritage of Humanity Site by UNESCO. The once-splendid old town, with its narrow cobbled streets, is now run-down, but it does contain Brazil's largest number of Portuguese Colonial buildings, dating back to 1612. Sultry and intriguing, São Luís is situated a mere two degrees below the equator. The beaches are a main attraction, and it is not without coincidence that there are Caribbean influences here, with Brazilian-style reggae music very popular. The upscale **São Francisco** neighborhood is where to go for dining and entertainment.

This is far from an easy city to drive around in as an outsider, and hiring a local guide will go a long way toward enhancing the quality of your trip. There is a lot of folklore and unusual mysticism here and your time is best spent enjoying the cultural side of the city, especially in the old town district with its colorful Portuguese tile façades. The economy was once mainly cotton and rice production, dependent on slave labor. At the former slave market Cafua das Mercês there is a **Museu do Negro** museum on Rua Jacinto Maia, 43, that offers a worthwhile glimpse into the Afro-Brazilian culture. As in Salvador, there is a strong Afro-Brazilian tradition. São Luís was built mainly by exploiting slave labor, and the descendents of these Bantus keep many of their original traditions alive to this day. The Afro-indigenous fusion religion, candomblé, remains a strong religious practice here but the worship centers are not welcoming to foreigners unless you know an insider. There are many other folkloric traditions that represent the eclectic mix of indigenous (originally of the Tupinambás tribe), African and Portuguese cultures. São Luís, like the other capitals of the Northeast, fell into decline in the 19th century and in 1865, during the First Republic, elaborate silver adornments were ransacked and what was left of the city's adornments fell into ruin. As in the rest of the Northeast Region, there is a lot of poverty and local prices and quality of services reflect the economic reality.

Getting There & Getting Around

There are regional flights to São Luís from Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and the major cities of the Northeast. The **Marechal Cunha Machado airport** is at Avenida dos Libaneses (☎ 98-217-9086). You can also take a bus from Teresina, which takes seven hours and costs under $20. The São Luís bus station is southeast of town on Avenida dos Franceses and buses depart several times a day for Teresina, Belem (which is about 12 hours away), or even longer routes, connecting cities such as Fortaleza, Recife or Belem. Another option is to arrive via coastal excursion but these are services geared to locals and you will probably need decent Portuguese to get around. The **Terminal Hidroviario** (port terminal) is at Rampa Campos Melo (☎ 98-231-4441). Taxis spare you the hassle of finding your way in the confusing city, where every street has two names, but they have a reputation for ripping off tourists. The coast itself is lined with palm groves, mangroves and lagoons. People routinely get lost and there is only minimal support in case something goes wrong. Travel services here do not necessarily adhere to international safety standards.

Tips & Suggestions

São Luís has fairly limited services for travelers but there has been a significant investment in recent years and it should keep getting better. This is especially true for the historic district. Exploring involves walking around outside in the tropical heat on cobble stones, so dress accordingly with comfortable shoes and adequate protection from the sun. The rainy season is generally in the first six months of the year. From July onward, it's sunny and windy. While perhaps not as dangerous as larger cities of the region, you should exercise caution at night and in isolated areas, never carrying anything that you couldn't bear to lose.

For More Information

Lists of credentialed guides and general information are available at the **Fumtur** tour board office at Praca Bendito Leite (aka the Palacio de Comercio), open 8 am-7 pm on weekdays and until 3 pm on weekends. ☎ 98-231-9086. **Ecodunas** (☎ 98-349-0545) is a well-known local outfitter offering trips around the city, to the Lençóis Maranhenses, the Delta de Parnaiba in Piaui state and other adventure and ecological tour options. Another good quality operator is **Taguatur Turismo** at Rua do Sol, 141, in the historic district (☎ 98-213-6400).

Festivals & Events

In June there is the famous and traditional *Bumba-Meu-Boi* festival, with plenty of music, dancing and colorful costumes. Similar to the festivals in the Amazonian region, the party depicts the story of a pregnant wife, Catarina, who demands that Francisco, her husband, steal a prize bull so that she can eat its tongue. Officially, it opens on June 13, but the party doesn't gain full steam until later in the month, especially in the neighborhood of João Paulo.

Sightseeing in São Luís

The city has a distinct charm to it, with stately Colonial row fronts and its curious local population. For the adventurous traveler, it is definitely worth a little time on your way to the Lençóis Maranhenses. In the past decade or so there have been some upgrades made here.

There is a good cultural center close by at Rua do Giz, 221, where you can check out the popular festival designs of the **Bumba-Meu-Boi**. Similar to the Boi Bumba festivities of the Northern Region, this pagan drama revives an ancient myth of a maiden's desire to feast on a prized bull, and a chosen champion's capture and slaying of the creature at her request. Here you can check out sequined and colorful bull masks and costumes. There are also displays of indigenous artifacts, ceramics, and local artisanship. The **Museu do Centro de Cultura Popular** here opens from 9 am-7 pm (closed Sunday and Monday). There is a minor exhibit at the **Museu de Artes Visuais**, on Rua Portugal, 273, where you can also soak up the local culture and folklore. A popular market nearby sells dried, salted shrimp and other dubious snacks. The museum has mildly interesting Portuguese tiles, engravings and prints.

Palácio dos Leões *(C. Lacerda)*

Architecture buffs might enjoy going to the **Palacio dos Leões**, the French fortress that was transformed into the government offices by the Portuguese. Dating originally from 1612, but remodelled over the years, the palace can be seen at the west end of Avenida Dom Pedro II.

The Neo-Classic **Teatro Artur Azevedo** dates from 1817 and was restored in recent decades. There are guided visits at 3 pm Wednesday through Sunday. It is at Rua do Sol (no number). Also check out the **Fonte das Pedras** (stone fountain) built by the Dutch in 1615 in a commemorative park. There is another interesting fountain called **Fonte do Riberão** with gargoyles and underground tunnels. They once led to churches and were designed to protect the population in case there was a takeover by rival Europeans or an uprising by the slaves. There are catacombs with adobe roof coverings and arches with cement made in part from papaya oil – an intriguing aspect to local folklore There are many local legends about them, but they have been closed off to visitation for safety reasons.

Another curiosity is the **Largo do Desterro**, with its Byzantine façade, which locals say is the only one like it in the country. There are some similar churches in Para, however (see *Amazonia*).

São Luís has a hot night life for its size and you might want to check out the reggae and calypso bars around town. Some have a reputation as rough places, though, so be careful.

★★★Adventures in the Lencois Maranhenses

The Lencois Maranhenses National Park means "the sheets of Maranahao," which refers to the way the shifting white dunes spread out over the horizon. The rainy season from January to May forms thousands of clear blue lakes, creating an extraordinary environment that draws travelers from all over the world. The closest city is **Barreirinhas** (160 miles/266 km, or about three hours by car, from São Luís) but there are other scenic villages with grass-roofed huts. The best time to go is from June to September, when the lakes are still present and it is not so rainy. The wind, responsible for the dune formations, is the strongest during the months of September and October. The average temperature ranges from 61-101°F/16-38°C, with interesting wildlife including many types of waterfowl and mangrove vegetation. Because the park is close to Piauí, there is some local rivalry over who in fact can claim the dunes, but Maranhão definitely has the Lençóis. This vast land of dunes where you can sink into the powdery white sand and plunge into a deserted and ever-changing lake is unlike anything else in Brazil. You can spend two or three days here if you include side-trips to **Barreirinhas** (there is a ferry crossing) or a boat trip on the "lazy river" **Rio Prequiça**. Even on foot there are some commendable trails. The terrain is rugged and solo trips are not advised. Sunglasses are indispensable because of the glare. Hire a guide in São Luis or in Teresina, with the option to go by boat or by Jeep. Side-trips to places such as **Rio Novo**, an isolated fishing village, and **Tutoia**, on the edge of the Delta of Parnaiba in Piaui state, are possible from both states and the Piaui side is no less spectacular for its dunes.

Where to Stay

São Luís Park Hotel ($$$) is close to the beach and considered one of the finest in town. It on Avenida Avicenia at the 10 km marker (☎ 98-216-4545). **Hotel Rio Poty** ($$$) is another beach hotel at the high end, on Avenida dos Holandeses at the 5 Km

Portas da Amazonia

marker (☎ 98-235-1500). The upscale **Praia Mar** ($$$) is on the beach on Avendia Sao Marcos at the 4 Km marker (☎ 98-235-5252). To economize (or if you just like the charming building) try the **Pousada Portas da Amazonia** ($$), a historic place near the beach and one of the main attractions in town (☎ 98-222-9937). Another such option is **Pousada do Frances** ($$), a historic building in the old town district, at Rua da Saavedra, 160 (☎ 98-231-4844).

Where to Eat

Dining out is an intriguing pastime for the adventurous palate in São Luis. Generally mild regional specialties are similar to the other Northeastern-style dishes, but more representative of Amazonian styles with indigenous accents. Fish, crab, shrimp, and other shellfish are excellent choices, or you can opt for the heavy food typical of the dry, desert region called the Sertão, such as carne de sol and fried manioc. One of the local dishes you may want to sample is cuxá, a green sauce made from manioc flour, sesame seed, dried shrimp and a bitter herb thought to come from Africa called vinagreira, among other spices. It is sometimes mixed with rice and served with fish. Shrimp served in two halves of a pineapple is called camarão maracangalha. As in Piaui, you can sample the local firewater made from manioc, called tiquira. For something less potent and refreshing in the heat, don't pass up the delicious local fruit juices made from bacuri, pitanga, or cupuacu. One of the curiosities of Maranhao is that some of the best places to eat are simply people's homes, often with some grass roof shelter to beat the heat: these are called "bases" and you tend to find them more outside the city near the tourist attractions.

Cheiro Verde ($$) serves local cuisine at Avenida Sao Luis Rei de Franca, 131, in Olho d'Agua (☎ 98-248-1641). **Restaurante Maracangalha** ($$) is another option at Avenida Litoranea, 45, on the Praia do Calhau (☎ 98-233-6764). **The Cabana do Sol** ($$) on Rua Joao Damesceno, 24, is recommended (☎ 98-3235-2586), as is **A Veranda** ($$) on Rua Generio Rego 185 in Monte Castelo (☎ 98-3232-8428). You may want to try the **Base da Lenoca** ($), a famous but simple place at Avenida Pedro II, 181, in the Centro (☎ 98-235-0599).

What to Buy

There is a lot of bargain hunting in São Luis. Your best bets are locally produced arts and crafts such as lace, leather, ceramics and straw fiber items. The **Centro de Artesenato** at Rua de São Pantaleão, 1232, opens from 9 am to 7 pm Monday through Saturday. You can compare prices at the **Praca do Mercado** and the shops in the vicinity that have mostly the same goods.

The Central West

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The Central West region includes the states of **Mato Grosso**, **Mato Grosso do Sul**, **Goiás** and **Brasília**, the federal capital with its own administrative district. Although this region covers 20% of Brazilian territory, it is sparsely populated, and there is mostly agriculture and ranching in the settled areas. While there are some major cities and solid economy, it still retains the feel of a frontier region. The Central West has several of the most important destinations for ecological and adventure tourism in Brazil, including the **Pantanal**, a vast and virtually impenetrable wetland, home to some of the most interesting wildlife in all of South America. The region is rich with history and culture, as it was here that the horrifying and bloody war of the Triple Alliance (Brazil, Argentina and Uruguay) against Paraguay was fought, carving out the modern borders to the west and the south of Brazil.

Much of the Brazilian territory in this region once belonged to Paraguay, and to this day there are distinctly Spanish cultural roots and customs intermixed with the indigenous and Portuguese people. To the south of the Pantanal is the ecological paradise known as **Bonito**, in the mountain range known as the **Serra da Bodoquena**. This is filled with unique geological formations, such as limestone caves and sinkholes, waterfalls and sparkling springs teeming with freshwater fish. The northern fringe of the Pantanal is striking for its geography, similar to the southern outskirts of the Amazon rainforest. While the Pantanal is well preserved, there is not much left of the unspoiled rainforest in this region, since most of the Southern Amazon has been wiped out due to decades of reckless land use.

At the eastern side of the region is the dry savannah scrubland called the Cerrado and the westernmost portion of the central highlands of Brazil. In this section there are sensational ecological destinations hidden amid the austere bluffs and canyonlands of **Chapada dos Guimarães** and **Chapada dos Veadeiros**. These, like the Pantanal and the Serra da Bodoquena, are considered among the most beautiful natural attractions in the country and are all highly recommended places to visit.

How This Section Works

The Central West has been divided into separate sections for convenience. The **Pantanal & the West** section includes the states of **Mato Grosso** and **Mato Grosso do Sul**, on the border with Paraguay and Bolivia. These two states were both called Mato Grosso throughout much of Brazil's history but were divided for political reasons in the 1970s. Each of these states has its own specific destinations and between them they share the Pantanal, which is treated in its own chapter for the unique destination that it is.

The **Central Highlands & the Cerrado** section covers the easternmost portion of the area on the border with the Northeast and the Southeast regions. Here you will find the state of **Goias** and the Federal District of **Brasília**. While this region offers less to do and see compared to the Far West and Pantanal, the landscape with its savannah is very different and there are some rewarding destinations that are worth a look.

As elsewhere in this book the chapters are divided first by state then by city, but the region is peculiar in that most of the destinations are outside the cities. Therefore, the cities in this section (except Brasília, which is a gem of contemporary architecture) are recommended as bases for exploration and are not really worth visiting for themselves alone. In general they are modern with good facilities at an international standard, and they certainly offer enough to keep you busy on a short stay.

Here is a grouping of the main destinations according to what they offer:

Road Trips

- Transpantaneira in Mato Grosso (Cuiabá)
- Pantanal Highway Park in Mato Grosso do Sul (Corumbá)

- Overland from Campo Grande to Bonito

Wildlife Observation

- Pantanal
- Bonito (Mato Grosso do Sul)
- Emas Park (Goiás)

Sport Fishing

- Cuiabá (side-trips) in Mato Grosso
- Corumbá in Mato Grosso do Sul

Natural Wonders

- Chapada dos Guimarães (Mato Grosso)
- Chapada dos Veadeiros (Goiás)
- Bonito (Mato Grosso do Sul)
- Pantanal

Culture & Nightlife

- Brasília
- Campo Grande
- Cuiabá

Pantanal & the West

Mato Grosso

Mato Grosso *(www.britannica.com)*

The name Mato Grosso refers to the "thick vegetation" that Portuguese settlers found covering much of the state. Apart from the southern fringes of the Amazon rainforest, there are two of the largest river basins (the Prata and Amazon) in the state. For this reason Mato Grosso is considered one of the top freshwater sport fishing destinations in South America. It also has its own distinct culture, with a mix of populations, including indigenous tribes, Afro- and Euro-descended people, and more recent immigrants who have settled here in the last 300 years. There are unusual folk celebrations and music typical of Mato Grosso, handicrafts found nowhere else, and unique culinary styles based on centuries of tradition. There is also one of the largest indigenous populations anywhere in Brazil, and they are thought to have settled here as far back as 8,000 years ago (some experts even think there were people here 15,000 years ago). Today there are 40 different indigenous groups here.

The first European settlers arrived in 1530, as Spanish explorers pressed inland and colonized the banks of the Paraguay River. As the Spanish were forced out by incursions by Portuguese explorers, the sparsely settled region began to be governed by the Colonial administration in São Paulo and remained so until 1748. As the gold and diamond rush got underway, more settlers began to arrive and the historic capital of **Cuiabá** and other cities like **Cáceres** and **Poconé** were built, leaving behind reminders of the past such as Colonial churches, ruins and fortresses. The region today is developing fast as agriculture and industry expand, but remains a rugged and wild territory in many parts of the state. Nearly two thirds of the state is considered a wildlife preserve.

Cuiabá

- Close to the Pantanal and Chapada dos Guimarães
- The geodesic center of South America
- Experience the local culture and cuisine

City of Cuiabá (M. Hidalgo)

Cuiabá is the prosperous capital of Mato Grosso, with close to 500,000 inhabitants. Wandering bands of mercenary explorers and slavers called *Bandeirantes* discovered gold nearby in 1719, sparking an influx of colonization that over the next century managed to destroy and drive into hiding many of the indigenous groups that once thrived here. Opulent mansions and churches sprang up during the short-lived boom, but as the wealth trickled out, the once powerful and independent colony began to depend on trade with Spanish colonies in what are today Bolivia and Paraguay. The city keeps these historic and cultural ties to this day, sharing as much in common with the former Spanish colonies as it does with the rest of Brazil. The city is reasonably modern with a solid economy based on agriculture, but there is not a lot to do and travelers on their way to the northern section of the Pantanal or to the beautiful Chapada dos Guimarães National Park should not waste much time here. Even so there is an active cultural scene and some interesting historical buildings, as well as a decent number of bars, restaurants and hotels. The city's claim to fame, apart from its status as one of the hottest cities in South America, with temperatures that can soar to 109°F/43°C in the summer, is that it is situated at the geodesic center of the continent. The rainy season is from December to March when it also the hottest, while from June through September it cools off to as low as 60°F. From here you can take a side-trip to the growing ecological tourism area called Nobres or to the Aguas Quentes hot springs.

How to Get Here

Cuiabá is the main travel hub in the state. The easiest way to get here is by air on one of the domestic airlines. **Marechal Rondon Airport** (☎ 65-682-2213) is a $10-15 taxi ride to downtown.

By car, federal Highway BR 163 links to a city called **Rondonópolis**, then southward to **Coxim** in the Pantanal region of Mato Grosso do Sul. From Rondonópolis it is possible to continue east to Goiânia and Brasília (but the latter about 660 miles/1,100 km away, so you might prefer to take a plane). At the time of writing, an important project was planned to rebuild the totally destroyed stretch of Highway BR-163 that links to Santarém and Pará state in the Amazon. To the south is the famous **Transpantaneira Highway** that crosses through the swamps to **Poconé** and **Porto Jafre** on the border with Mato Grosso do Sul. From here you can also drive to the headwaters of the Rio Cuiabá, at the town of **Barão de Melgaço** – an alternative entryway to the Pantanal.

To get here by bus, there are air-conditioned executive buses (*leitos*) with departures and arrivals several times per day to and from Poconé (three hours), Barão de Melgaço (five hours), Chapada dos Guimarães (two hours), Cáceres (four hours), Goiânia (13 hours), Brasília (16 hours), and Campo Grande (10 hours). Costs range from $10 to $50. The **Motta** busline (☎ 65-621-1159) has an Internet site at www.motta.com.br.

The Engenho de Sá **bus station** (☎ 65-682-3629) is on Avenida Marechal Deodoro, the same highway you take to get to Chapada dos Guimarães, 1.8 miles/three km from downtown. From there you can catch a cab for under $10 into town.

Getting Around

The center of town is **Praça de República** on Avenida Getúlio Vargas, with shops, hotels and restaurants nearby. The Centro empties out at night but the city is generally safe. There are local buses but getting around in the Centro is easiest on foot, by taxi or rental car. **Car rentals** include Localiza (☎ 65-624-7979), **Avis** (☎ 65-682-5077) and **Hertz** (☎ 65-682-2230), at the airport or downtown. A rental car is a good option for the Pantanal (though, unless you are in a group, it may be cheaper just to go with a travel agency). Car rental costs around $30-60 per day. Traffic can be a little hectic near the port, as roads are narrow and not clearly marked. **Taxis** are pretty cheap and you can get from one end of town to the other for under $10.

If you plan to stay in a Pantanal lodge, they will typically help with ground transfer from the airport.

To get local currency there are ATMs at the airport and at the **Banco do Brasil** office on Avenida Getúlio Vargas and Rua Barão de Melgaço downtown, where you can also trade currency if you don't mind the wait and lower rate. There are also exchange bureaus (*casas de cambio*) on Rua Ricardo Franco and some of the larger hotels, but they are expensive.

Credit cards are not widely accepted at the restaurants, so bring cash.

For More Information

The **Tourism Secretariat** (Sedtur) has offices at the Casarão do Tesouro, on Praça da República, 131, in the Centro. They are open from 8:30 am to 6 pm but closed at indeterminate periods for lunch (☎ 65-624-9060 or 65-613-9300). There is free Internet access here!

Travel Agencies & Guides

Given Cuiabá's strategic location, there are dozens of travel agencies with a variety of options, including day-trips for around $50 or even longer excursions into the Pantanal. These operators can arrange transportation, lodging at the *fazendas* (see *Pantanal* section for more about this) and guides. You don't really need them if you decide to take the Transpantaneira Highway into the Pantanal on your own, but you might opt to let them handle the details so you can enjoy yourself.

Among the options are **Anaconda Turismo**, Avenida Isaac Póvoas, 606 (☎ 65-624-4142), **Ametur Turismo**, Avenida Isaac Póvoas, 105 (☎ 65-624-1000), **Kanzen Turismo**, Rua Desembargador Trigo de Loureiro, 602 (☎ 65-642-1990), **Natureco Viagens e Turismo**, Rua Barão Melgaço, 2015 (☎ 65-321-1001), **Araruana Turismo Ecológico**, Avenida Miguel Sutil, 10902 (☎ 65-626-1067), **Faunatur** (☎ 65-634-5338), **Pantanal Ecotur**, Avenida Isaac Póvoas 557-A (☎ 65-3023-8220 or 65-9982-6226), or **Pantanal Tour** (☎ 65-626-1145 or 65-9605-2405).

Note that you should be able to get information on these operators and at least a dozen more from **Sedtur**, including whether your guide is legitimate or has had serious complaints. Most of them also have Internet sites with information about the services they offer.

Festivals & Events

The **São Benedito Festival**, at the Igreja Nossa Senhora do Rosário, takes place in the last week of June and first week of July. It is kept alive by the descendents of the slaves who built the mines, farms, factories and households that made the city great. Dating back to 1718, the festival has dances called the *siriri*, the *cururu*, the *congo*, and the *boi-a-serra* and a weird masked dance in honor of Saint Benedito, the city's patron. Afterward there is a street party with stalls selling drinks and snacks.

Sightseeing

Sightseeing is pretty much confined to the historic district and you can see what there is in a day.

★The **Palácio da Instrução**, on Praça da República, 151, was built in 1913 and has four separate exhibits on natural history, anthropology, history, and sacred arts. Open Monday through Friday, 12:30 am-5:30 pm (☎ 65-624-9098). The **Casarão do Tesouro** nearby is the gold treasury from 1897, which today serves as the Tourism Secretariat, open Monday through Friday, 8 am-6 pm. ☎ 65-624-9060.

★The **River Museum and Aquarium Complex** (Museu do Rio), on Avenida Beira Rio (no number) in the revamped Port district, is worth a quick look for their historical exhibits and tanks with river fish. The best thing to do, though, is to have a drink and watch the sunset over the river. Open 9 am-6 pm Tuesday through Sunday. ☎ 65-623-1440.

PALACIO DA INSTRUCCÃO
1903

Palácio da Instrução
(M. Hidalgo)

Adventures at the Hot Springs

The **Águas Quentes** is a park filled with wildlife and with a hot spring. Clearly marked 48 miles/80 km from Cuiabá along BR-163, it is close to the famous **Chapada dos Guimarães**, an ecological tourism destination described on page 366. The natural water temperature of the springs is 92-109°F/31-43°C, and the water is reputed to provide medicinal benefits.

ON THE TRANSPANTANEIRA HIGHWAY

The Transpantaneira is a precarious dirt road through the Pantanal. Roughly 87 miles/145 km long, the route is slow going over creaky wooden bridges and potholes, but there is no better overland route through the Pantanal and you will have a chance to see wild critters up close.

Built in the 1970s, the highway, also called MT 060, was intended to link Cuiabá with Corumbá in Mato Grosso do Sul, but it never got that far. Today the road links the town of Poconé with Porto Jofre and is virtually unused except as a sightseeing route.

You can drive it solo, but the best time to go is in the dry season from November to May. Any other time of year the road gets even worse and bridges have actually been swept away in the rainy season. You don't need a four-wheel-drive vehicle to make the trip – any rented small passenger car is suitable.

As you bounce along, you will see hundreds of birds and animals, including alligators, capybaras, deer and possibly even such shy creatures as ocelots or anteaters. Bring a camera or video recorder with you.

For safety you should travel only during the day, and make sure to fill up at Poconé as it's the last chance for several hours until you reach **Pixaim**, where you can stop for lunch. Crossing over the wooden bridges requires a bit of caution. You have to get out and line up your tires on the vertical slats (you may need to straighten them yourself). Don't park on the bridges. But you should get across just fine. It will be something to tell your grandchildren about.

Remember, this is the wilderness. Follow all the other precautions for Pantanal travel listed in that section. See *Poconé* in *Side-Trips* for places to stay and eat along the way.

Where to Eat

Cuiabá's cuisine is influenced by indigenous and Pantanal styles. Most of the local specialties are made with river fish (pacu, dourado, cachara, pintado, which is a little muddy tasting, and piraputanga). These are served up in traditional dishes, such as *mojica*, which is stewed bits of pintado with tomato, onion, manioc, scallions, parsley, and cilantro, or as *ventrucha*, which are fried pacu ribs eaten with your fingers (watch out for the bones).

As fishing is supposed to be prohibited from November to February during the spawn, fresh fish can be hard to come by and at those times the tasty *pantaneira* beef is the way to go. For desert, try *furrundu*, a treat made from papaya, coconut and brown sugar.

Al Manzul ($$$) is a good Lebanese *rodizio*-style restaurant, where dozens of dishes are brought to your table. It's in the scenic Cachoeira das Garças Park on Rua Arquimedes Pereira Lima at the 9 Km mark. Open at irregular schedules so your best bet is lunch on the weekend (☎ 65-663-2237).

Caxara na Brasa ($$) at Praça Jaime de Figueredo, 130, has grilled fish and beef dishes. Open for lunch and dinner Tuesday through Sunday. ☎ 65-322-6420.

Cacalo Peixaria ($$) serves pacu stuffed with *farofa*, which is made with kale or banana. At Avenida 31 de Março, 203, it opens for lunch every day and for dinner Monday through Saturday (☎ 65-626-1778).

Peixaria Popular ($) serves cheap and delicious regional cuisine. In the Goiabeiras neighborhood on Avenida São Sebastião, 2324, it's open for lunch and dinner every day and lunch only on Sunday (☎ 65-322-5471).

Restaurante Regionalíssimo ($$) serves local cuisine in a buffet at Rua 13 de Junho, 315, in the Port district next to the Casa do Artesão. Open for lunch only (☎ 65-623-6881).

Where to Stay

Accommodations are plentiful and offer reasonably good quality for the price. Service charges of 10% are normal. You might try bargaining for a discount.

Eldorado Cuiabá ($$), at Avenida Isaac Póvoas, 1000, has air-conditioned rooms with television, restaurant and pool with a waterfall. ☎ 65-624-4000 or 65-624-1572.

Global Garden ($), at Avenida Sutil, 5555, has air-conditioning, television, a restaurant, Internet and pool. ☎ 65-614-5000.

Mato Grosso Palace Best Western ($), at Rua Joaquim Murtinho, 170, is air-conditioned, with television and a restaurant. ☎ 65-614-7000.

Paia Guás Palace ($-$$), at Avenida Rubens de Mendonça, 1718, has air-conditioning, sauna, pool and restaurant with a view toward Chapada dos Guimarães. ☎ 65-642-5353.

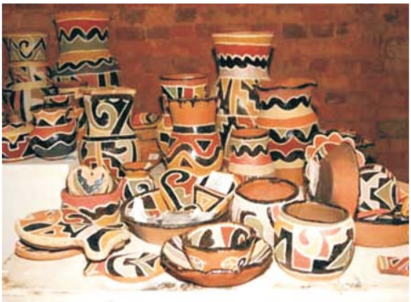
Hotel Taiamã ($-$$), at Avenida Rubens de Mendonça 1184, has air-conditioned rooms with television and pool. ☎ 65-2121-1000.

Hotel Presidencial ($) at the entrance to Cuiabá on Avenida Fernando Corrêa da Costa 8780, has simple air-conditioned rooms with a pool and a good breakfast. ☎ 65-665-2800.

Amazon Plaza Hotel ($$) has indigenous décor with air-conditioning, television, broad-band Internet, rooms for the physically impaired, a pool and leisure space with hammocks. It is at Avenida Getúlio Vargas, 600. ☎ 65-2121-2000 or 65-623-3708.

What to Buy

The **Casa do Artesão** sells local and indigenous handicrafts from its shop on Rua 13 de Junho, 315, in the Centro near the river. Open daily 8 am-6 pm. There is a famous restaurant annex called **Regionalíssimo** with a tasty lunch buffet (☎ 65-321-0603). The **Indigenous Affairs Department** (**Funai**) runs a shop called



Artíndia, at Rua Pedro Celestino, 301, with items by local Bororó, Xavante, Parcel, Umutina, and Ribastsa tribes, as well as some from the Amazonian region. Open weekdays 7:30-11:30 am and 1:30-5:30 pm (☎ 65-623-1675).

There is an arts and crafts fair (**Feira de Artesanato**) at Praça Santos Dumont on Avenida Getúlio Vargas (about 15 minutes on foot from Praça da República). It takes place all day Saturday and on Sunday afternoons. The museums listed above have shops as well.

Side-Trips

Nobres

Blue Lagoon Cave

Nobres is 84 miles/140 km from Cuiabá, in the Tombador mountain range. Nobres still has inadequate facilities but is worth it if you don't mind a few inconveniences. To get here, take a car or bus from Cuiabá along BR-364 and BR-163, a few hours from Cuiabá.

The region is intensely beautiful. Streams and rivers wind through the mountains. There are cliffs, waterfalls and caves, with archeological sites and cave paintings. Extending from the edge of the Cerrado to the central highlands of Brazil, and north to the southern edge of the Amazon rainforest, the region is known for its limestone caves and crystal clear rivers. In the region you can enjoy waterfalls, horseback riding, snorkeling, hiking, wildlife and, with a permit from the **Funai Indigenous Affairs Department**, you can visit the local Bakairi tribe.

The most reccomended sites are **Blue Lagoon Cave** (Gruta do Lago Azul), with an underground lake that turns blue in the light, or **São José Cave**, which has bizarre limestone formations. Another great destination is the underground river and cave formation at **Duto do Quebó**.

Get in touch with the travel agencies in Cuiabá, who have more information about the options for guided tours in the region, as going solo is not recommended.

Poconé

The settlement of Poconé dates from the Gold Rush era of 1777 and is one of the main gateways to the northern Pantanal. This section of the Pantanal extends between Rio Cuiabá to the east and Rio Paraguai to the west, where the scrublands end and the floodplains begin. Situated at the junction of State Highway MT-060 (the Transpantaneira), which is the only way in, Poconé is midway between **Cuiabá** and **Porto Jafre**. You can drive or take a bus from Cuiabá, and the **bus station** is at Rua Justino Francisco, one km from the town center (☎ 65-345-1677).

The small town is famous for its local crafts such as pottery, ceramics, baskets, hammocks, and rustic stringed instruments called *violas do cocho*. It is also known regionally for the **São Benedito Festival** in June, with a mock battle between Christians and Moors on horseback, and folk celebrations that combine Spanish and indigenous customs. Downtown, a **cultural center** in a Colonial mansion at Rua Salvador Marques, 348 (☎ 65-345-3009) opens weekdays from 7 am to 5 pm. You can buy handicrafts here. The tour guides' association, **ASSOPTUP**, is at Praça Menino Jesus, 135 (☎ 65-345-2712). There's not much in town though – the main attraction here is the Pantanal Highway, but nearby you can go on boat trips or try horseback riding.

Violas do cocho

(R. Reis)

There are several *fazenda* lodges here for overnights or day use. There are restaurants at the Praça de Matriz or Avenida Anibal de Toledo, or at the lodges. See the *Pantanal* section or consult the travel agencies in Cuiabá.

For more information, see the callout on the *Transpantaneira* (page 361).

Barão de Melgaço

Barão de Melgaço is another gateway to the Pantanal. With only 2½% of the municipality on dry land, sightseeing is mainly via boat, where you can observe wildlife from a short distance. The region has numerous rivers, waterfalls and lakes that make for a scenic trip. The town is small but reasonably serviced with hotels and restaurants. To get there, drive or take a bus from Cuiabá 84 miles/140 km away. The region was once inhabited by the *Bororo* indigenous tribes, and after the rainy season you can still find pottery shards and utensils along the banks of the

Baia Chacoré, one of the two bays east of the city. The other is **Baia de Siá Mariana**, with white sand beaches. Both are great for wildlife viewing. Many of the *fazendas* in the region offer boat trips here. About two hours away on the Rio Cuiabá is a famous nesting place for waterfowl. Sport fishing is another popular option. There are also historical sites dating from the war with Paraguay. The **bus station** in Barão de Melgaço is at Avenida Fernando Correia (☎ 65-331-1332), with two four-hour departures per day to and from Cuiabá. A day-trip is an option but you might prefer an overnight at the recommended **Pousada Mutum** ($$$) – see the *Pantanal* section. The cheaper **Barão Tur Hotel** ($-$$) has air-conditioning and a pool, with access to a boat. It's at Rua Totó Paes, 491 (☎ 65-331-1166).

Jaciara & Rondonópolis

These are two towns on the eastern fringe of the Pantanal, right where the Cerrado scrublands begin. **Jaciara** is 90 miles/150 km from **Barão de Melgaço** on Highway BR-070, or 84 miles/140 km along BR-163 direct from Cuiabá. Get in touch with the travel agencies in Cuiabá.

There you can visit a sandstone cave with a spring called **Caverna que Chora**, 36 miles/60 km north of the town, and just outside of town is the **Vale das Perdidas** with indigenous rock inscriptions. If you like rafting, there are rapids (level two to four) nearby. Other options include hot springs, or cascading by rappel. The **bus station** is at Avenida Antonio F. Sobrinho (☎ 66-461-1426). For tourist information, ☎ 66-461-3807. A day-trip is probably best, but you can lodge in the **Taba** ($) at Highway BR-364, at the 273 Km marker. ☎ 66-461-1541.

About 48 miles/80 km farther on BR-163 is **Rondonópolis** (135 miles/225 km from Barão de Melgaço), with two-dozen archeological sites and cave paintings accessible by trails. The Rondonópolis **bus station** is on Avenida Fernando Correia da Costa (☎ 66-423-1911). Here there are several options for lodging such as the **Novotel** ($$) on Rua Floriano Peixoto, 711 (☎ 0800-11790 or 66-423-1050).

Chapada dos Guimarães

- Trek through red sandstone canyons and fields
- Explore caves or try rapelling in and around the park
- Go rafting or cool off in waterfalls and watering holes

Chapada dos Guimarães National Park is a 92,000-acre/33,000-ha nature preserve considered one of Brazil's most important ecological destinations. Located 39 miles/65 km from **Cuiabá** to the north of the **Pantanal** in the rugged plateau of the Cerrado, the region was named by colonists for the area of the same name in northern Portugal. It is a region of uncommon beauty, with high sandstone cliffs in tones of red and orange, some nearly 1,500 feet high. Hiking here you will find waterfalls, picturesque rock formations, fields, forests and the twisted vegetation characteristic of the scrublands of the Central West. Situ-

Véu de Noiva waterfall
(M. Hidalgo)

ated on one of the oldest landforms in South America at about 2,560 feet above sea level, the region was a seabed six million years ago. This gave is the source of its unusual topography. To the north, watersheds flow into the Amazon river basin and, to the south, into the Plata river basin.

The region has a pleasant semi-humid tropical climate that is cooler than Cuiabá and the Pantanal, with average temperatures of 75°F/24°C, but soaring at certain times of the year. There are archeological sites with prehistoric rock paintings and fossils. The town called **Chapada dos Guimarães** has artisans who work with local materials. Because of its location at the geodesic center of the continent, and on the 15th Parallel (purported by a 19th-century mystic named Dom Bosco to be an esoteric energy belt), locals believe this to be a mystical area, with supernatural qualities and paranormal activities such as UFO sightings. There is said to be a "hole" in the earth's magnetic field here that receives cosmic vibrations. It started to become a "new age" destination during the 1980s, but the park was not officially designated until 1989. As with all National Parks in Brazil, there is no fishing or hunting, no camping in the park, and you are forbidden to disturb vegetation and wildlife. Much of the park is actually private property, though, and access may involve a fee. In the grassy fields you may see capybaras, armadillos, deer and anteaters. More rarely, you will see South American wild dogs, guara-wolves or tapirs. Also known to exist here are coatis, opossums, ocelots, otters, weasels, and monkeys. Birds are common, especially emus, macaws, toucans, vultures, cranes, jays and even the very rare harpy eagle. Sometimes you might see turtles or a *teiú* lizard bolting through the underbrush and even a snake or two, but most are not poisonous. Vegetation includes many kinds of trees, orchids, cinnamon, and even the famous flowering trees called ipês, which are a national symbol of Brazil and believed to have medicinal properties. In some of the regions close to the water there are varieties of bug-eating plants.

How to Get Here

To get to town, take the paved State Highway MT 251 (also called Emanuel Pinheiro) 39 miles/65 km from **Cuiabá**. The park is just 5.4 miles/nine km away from the town and the drive is easy. It's a two-hour trip. For most destinations you will need a guide, and they can arrange transportation to the attractions. Getting there by bus is recommended and the **Chico Moreira Terminal Rodoviária** (bus station) is at Rua Fernando Corrêa da Costa. At the time this was written, there were only two taxis in this tiny town – one at the bus station and the other at Praça Bispo Dom Wunibaldo. There are three bus lines: **Expresso Rubi**, **Rápido Chapadense**, and **Viação Lago Azul**. Buses leave for the Chapada at frequent intervals all day, and the fare is $10. Bring cash, as exchange facilities are limited.

For More Information

The **Tourism Secretariat** (☎ 65-791-1195) is at Praça da Matriz on Rua Quinco Caldas. There is Internet access at **VSP** on Rua Cipriano Curvo (Praça da Matriz). An excellent website provides additional information and photos at www.chapadadosguimaraes.com.br.

Tips For Enjoying the Park

You need at least one day to see the park but two to four days would be preferable. You could even spend a week or more if you wanted but you are probably better off combining your trip with a visit to the Pantanal if you have the time.

The park is open year-round but the rainy season from November to May (December through February especially) can be inconvenient. The hot, dry winter is from June to October, with periods of heavy fog later in the season that also can interfere. The park tends to get crowded on weekends at any time of year.

There are rustic but adequate shops in town for film, food, etc. You should bring comfortable tennis shoes or hiking boots (bring extra socks as you may cross over streams), shorts, lightweight shirt, a hat, sunglasses, and swimwear.

It can get hot and very sunny during the day but temperatures can drop to near freezing in the winter or at higher elevations, and a lightweight jacket or sweater is a good idea. Sunscreen and mosquito repellent are recommended, but you are not permitted to swim in the park itself if you use them. A canteen or bottled water is a very good idea too, though you can drink from the springs in some areas.

You might also consider binoculars, a camera or a video recorder. A rucksack is fine for carrying your belongings, and you should bring a snack.

There are potentially dangerous scorpions, spiders and snakes, but they are not common – just stay on the trails and be careful where you sit and what you touch. There are some high cliffs without guard rails so be very careful. No vaccines are needed. In the case of an emergency, there is a **hospital** (Santo Antônio da Chapada, ☎ 65-791-1117) in town.

Guides are available in Cuiabá or in Chapada dos Guimarães.

Travel Agencies & Guides

Eco Turismo Cultural, at Praça da Matriz, 464 (☎ 65-310-1393 or 65-9952-1989), run by local outfitter Jorge "Moby" Mattos, offers rappelling, hikes, horseback riding, and caves geared toward small groups, with ground transfer, including pickup at the Cuiabá airport.

Atmã Turismo Ecológico, at Rua Quinco Caldas, 333, has trips to the Chapada and the Pantanal, with caving, trekking, rappelling, and horseback trips. ☎ 65-301-3392 or 65-9971-5056.

JRG Turismo, at Rua Fernando Corrêa da Costa, 1065, has bilingual guide services to the park and the Pantanal. ☎ 65-301-1176 or 65-9971-2165)

Bilingual guides to the Chapada and Pantanal are also available at **Agência de Turismo Central de Guias**, at Praça Matriz. ☎ 65-301-1687 or 65-9977-6089.

Sightseeing in Town

The **Igreja NS Santana** is a blue-and-white Baroque-style church built from adobe by slaves in 1779 at the main square, where there is also an arts and crafts fair on the weekends. Visits are Tuesday through Sunday, 7-11 am and 1:30-5 pm.

The **Memory Room** (Sala da Memória) is a small museum with a few items on display and photographs from the region's Colonial past. At Rua Quinco Caldas, it opens in the morning and afternoon on weekdays.

Adventures in the Park

The park entrance is at the 55 km mark, 6.6 miles/11 km from the town center on MT-251. It costs a dollar to get in and it's open from 7 am to 5 pm. If you go by car you can park at Véu de Noiva waterfall. Inside, there is a restaurant and bathrooms.

★The Trail of the Waterfalls

The park's top destination is the **Véu de Noiva** (Bride's Veil) waterfall, with a drop so steep the water turns entirely to mist on the way down, and hardly touches the rocks below at all. Nearby is the 48-foot/15-m **Cachoeirinha** (Little Waterfall), with a very clear and cold pool and a tiny beach – a restaurant, snack bar and bathrooms are nearby. At the same spot is **Cachoeira dos Namorados** (Lovers' Falls) where you can swim under the falls and walk nearly 20 feet behind them. There are others such as **Cachoeira Hydromassegem** (Jacuzzi Falls) with a bubbly pool or **Cachoeira do Pulo** (Jumping Falls) where you can jump in from a ledge. Another famous waterfall is the steep **Cachoeira das Andorinhas**, surrounded by a rock wall with a pool for swimming. If you are willing to walk from the Véu de Noiva nearly two miles, you can visit them all. You don't need a guide, as the trails are clear.

Not far from the waterfalls, the **Casa da Pedra** (Stone House) is a large sandstone cave that can hold up to 30 visitors. It is unfortunately defaced by inscriptions from modern visitors – but it is said that slaves carved some of them. You will need a guide to get here.

★★The Trail of the Rocks

The "trilha das pedras" is a rigorous trail 4.8 miles/eight km long that extends to the top of **Morro São Jeronimo**, the highest point in the park. The flat-topped hill is said to be a UFO port. To hike it takes about 1½ hours at a quick pace, or you can take a Jeep if you go with a guide, stopping at the several curious sandstone formations. A Jeep is recommended to save time as it takes a full day to hike it, but it is interesting either way.

Paredão de Eco

The Paredão de Eco (Echo Wall) is an immense sandstone wall and natural echo point in the upper parts of the Chapada with an incredible view. It is about nine miles/15 km from the park, three miles/five km along the road from the Água Fria district to the park.

Cidade de Pedra

★The Cidade de Pedra (City of Stone) is a group of natural rock formations rising from the forest like the alien spires of a ruined city, some 1,000 feet high. To get there you take the dirt road to Água Fria 12 miles/20 km from the MT-251 Highway and hike along a trail through the Fazenda Albatroz ranch until you reach the canyon. The hike takes 2½ hours.

Adventures Around the Park

Portão do Inferno

The Portão do Inferno (Gates of Hell) is on Highway MT-251 at the 42 Km mark between Cuiabá and Chapada dos Guimarães, and can be seen from the road. It is a natural overlook with sandstone walls over an immense pit once used to dispose of unlucky persons (hence its name). At the site there is a highway police outpost and a visitors center with a snack bar – stop here on your way to the park.

★Aroe Jari Cavern

The Aroe Jari Cavern is the largest sandstone cave in Brazil, 27.6 miles/ 46 km from town (east on MT-251 toward Campo Verde, turning right for another 6.6 miles/11 km at the sign). Flooded, it is very long and flat with a number of waterfalls inside. Near the entrance is a natural spring with clear blue water that reflects the light on the walls of the cavern.

Nearby is the **Blue Lagoon**, a natural subterranean pool. The water flows out of a 20-foot-high tunnel about 100 feet long. Outside, you can spot exotic birds. To get there you need to hike 3½ miles. It is worth it though – indigenous *Bororó* people who lived in this region called the place "the home of the souls," or "*aroe jari.*"

★★Center of South America

There is a great view from the **Mirante do Centro Geodésico**, where you can see the Pantanal and Cuiabá. This is actually the geodesic center of the continent and not the monument in **Campo Grande** that was built using data 100 years old. It is east of town on MT-251 (to Campo Verde) along a dirt road about 4.8 miles/eight km.

On Horseback

On horseback is one of the best ways to see the many different types of vegetation from grassland to forest and scrublands in a single trip. Day-trips are the most popular, but there are also longer expeditions throughout the year. Schedule your trip at least 24 hours in advance with the travel guides listed above.

Rappelling

Rappelling is very popular outside the park on private property, normally in waterfalls with qualified guides and insurance. The waterfalls are usually from about 60 to 80 feet high, and are considered appropriate for beginners. See *Travel Agencies & Guides* above for details.

Canyoning

Canyoning requires good physical condition to traverse a number of natural obstacles such as small waterfalls and streams, trails, pools and, at the spot called **Cachoeira da Geladeira**, a combination of rappelling and "tirolesa," which is sliding down a steel cable with a pulley. See *Travel Agencies & Guides* above for these adventures.

Where to Stay

Pousada Penhasco ($$-$$$), at Avenida Penhasco (2½ km from town), has air-conditioning, television, scenic views, tennis courts, a game room, a pool with waterfall, hot tub, restaurant and trails in the forest along the Rio Penhasco. ☎ 65-301-1555.

Pousada Laura Vicunã ($$) is on Highway MT-251 at the 60 Km mark (about 1.2 miles/two km from town). It has rooms and chalets with air-conditioning, television, a snack bar, restaurant, pool, bar, sand volley court, and trails to a waterfall. ☎ 65-301-2313.

Hotel Turismo ($), at Rua Fernando Corrêa da Costa, 1065, in town, has television, air-conditioning, adult and children's pools, and a Colonial-style breakfast. ☎ 65-301-1176 or 65-301-1384.

Pousada Pequizeiro ($$), at Avendia Homer Mouser, 1447 (half a mile/one km from town) has air-conditioning, television, pool, steam sauna and a restaurant. ☎ 65-301-3333.

Pousada Rios ($), on Rua Tiradentes, 333, in town, has budget rooms with air-conditioning, television, and breakfast included. ☎ 65-301-1126.

Pousada Solar Inglês ($$), at Rua Cipriano Curvo, 142, in town, has air-conditioning, cable television, hair dryers, pool, steam sauna, bar, breakfast and afternoon tea. ☎ 65-301-1389.

Pousada Solar Inglês

Camping

Camping is prohibited in the park. Travelers on a shoestring budget might consider **Camping Oasis** ($) at Rua Fernando Corrêa da Costa, 394, a green area in town with hot showers and bathrooms, clothesline and collective kitchen. ☎ 65-301-2444.

Where to Eat

Estilo Bacalhau & Vinho ($$$) has Portuguse food at Avenida do Penhasco, on the corner of Rua 17 in the Bom Clima neighborhood. Open Thursday and Friday for dinner from 7 pm and on the weekends for lunch and dinner. Reservations required. ☎ 65-301-3430.

Montanha Restaurante & Bar ($-$$) has regional food and snacks at Rua Dr. Penn Gomes, 524, downtown. Open daily 11 am-10 pm. ☎ 65-301-2481.

Morro dos Ventos ($$$), at Estrada do Mirante, about a mile/1½ km from town on a dirt road, has a view, serving local specialties mainly for lunch. Outside, there are trails. There is a fee of a few dollars to use the trails, which is discounted from the meal. ☎ 65-301-1030.

Restaurante Felipe II ($$) has live music during the busy periods, with regional-style food, drinks and snacks. At Rua Cipriano Curvo, 580, in town, it opens Friday from 7 pm, and on weekends from 10 am till late. ☎ 65-302-2048.

Restaurante O Mestrinho ($$), at Rua Quinco Caldas, 119, in town, has a good buffet on the weekends with salads, regional dishes, and desserts. During the week, it's à la carte. Open every day but Tuesday 11 am-3 pm and 6:30-10 pm. ☎ 65-9957-2113.

What to Buy

$ There are plenty of arts and crafts shops right around the main square with others on Rua Quinco Caldas and around town, including the studios of artists who live and work here. The best buys are macramé, bamboo curtains, ceramics, wood carvings and costume jewelry.

The Pantanal Wetlands

The Pantanal Wetlands is a huge and swampy floodplain covering the central portion of South America. The largest wetlands in the entire hemisphere, approximately half of its total area (89,000 square miles/ 230,000 square km) is in Brazil.

The Pantanal Wetlands

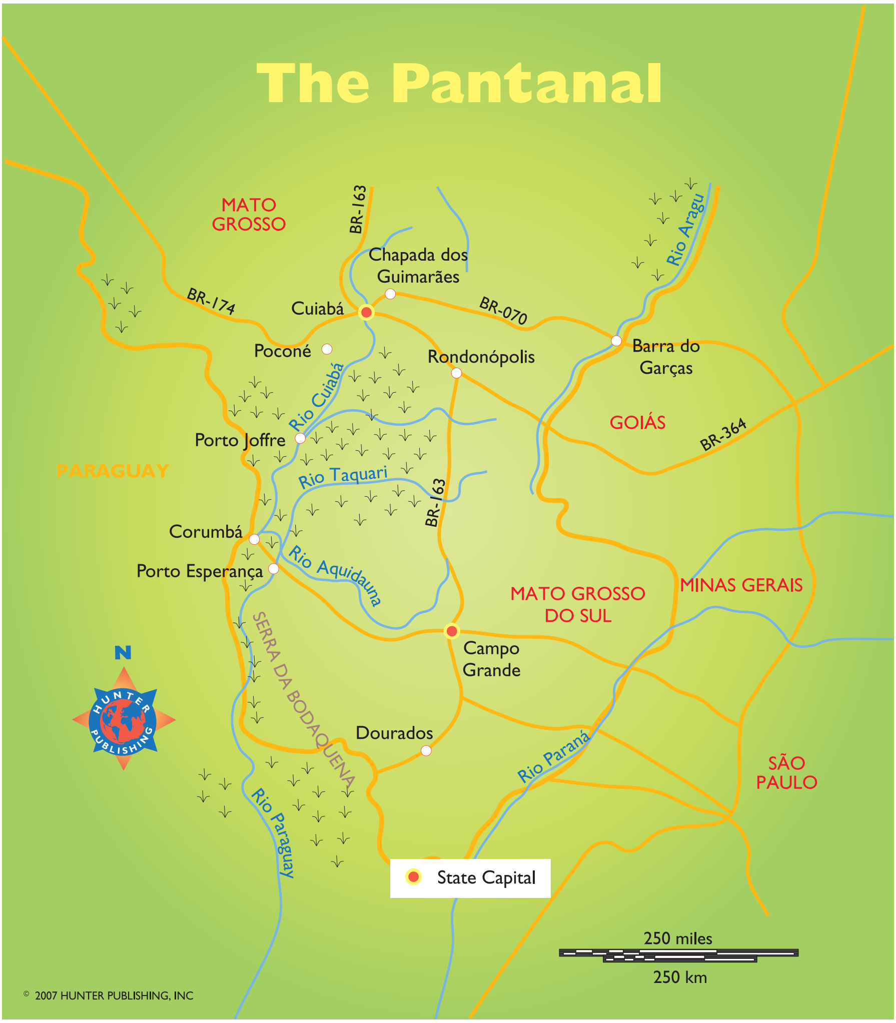
(Y. Arthus-Bertrand)

For ecological travel, the Pantanal is considered one of the best destinations in Brazil. Because it is remote, conditions are rustic and getting here can take a while, first flying to a nearby city then heading overland or by plane to a ranch with accommodations.

Perhaps not as beautiful as the Amazon, the Pantanal actually has better opportunities to see local wildlife in a complex interaction of ecosystems that changes with the seasons. In Brazil, about two-thirds of the region is in the south in Mato Grosso do Sul, and one third in the north in Mato Grosso. However, the distinction doesn't mean much since the region is uninhabited and almost impossible to traverse.

The Pantanal has about a dozen distinct regions, many with very subtle differences that are not easily apparent to the naked eye. This mix of environments ranges from rainforests (not unlike those in the Amazon) to areas that appear more like the Cerrado scrublands, and even areas with vegetation more common to the Caatinga of the Northeast.

The climate here is humid and tropical, with average temperatures over 75°F/24°C. From May through September there are cold air masses


The Pantanal
MATO GROSSO
BR-163
Chapada dos Guimarães
BR-174
Cuiabá
BR-070
Rio Aragu
Barra do Garças
Poconé
Rondonópolis
Rio Cuiabá
GOIÁS
BR-364
Porto Joffre
PARAGUAY
Rio Taquari
BR-163
Corumbá
Porto Esperança
Rio Aquidauna
MATO GROSSO DO SUL
MINAS GERAIS
N
HUNTER PUBLISHING
Campo Grande
SERRA DA BODAQUENA
Dourados
Rio Paraná
SÃO PAULO
Rio Paraguay
State Capital
250 miles
250 km

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from the Andes that bring blasts of dry, freezing winds. During the summer, the opposite happens, and temperatures can climb to 105°F/41°C as the moist air drifts south from the Amazon, meeting the arctic air moving north, and causing torrential rainfall that can last for days on end.

This rainy season is so severe that the swamp-dwelling *Pantaneiros*, as the locals are known, are often forced to abandon their homes and seek dry ground. At this time, dry patches called *cordilheiras* form where wildlife is forced to congregate, creating great viewing opportunities. The rains are most intense from October through March, when water levels can rise nearly 10 feet. Then, around May, the dry season begins, the lakes drain into rivers, the savannah appears again as the muddy terrain shrinks down to ponds and rivers, and fresh grasses appear.

The dry season is virtually the only time that it is possible to actually travel overland through most of the Pantanal. Still, there are no roads here and the only way for most travelers to experience the Pantanal is to stay at plantations called *fazendas*, most often venturing into the wetlands on foot or by boat.

How to Get Here

Access to the Pantanal is easiest from Cuiabá, in Mato Grosso, on the northern side, or Campo Grande, on the southern side, in Mato Grosso do Sul. From Bonito, you can also enter the southern portion of the Pantanal. Travel inside this huge wetland region is virtually impossible.

The best way to visit the Pantanal is to stay at a plantation. Depending on the season and the location of the plantation, you will either drive in or take an air taxi from one of the nearby cities. Each of the plantations is in a different area and they can provide specific instructions on how to get here. Also see the transport options or travel guides sections in Cuiabá, Campo Grande and Bonito, to help arrange transportation.

Planning Your Trip

One of the advantages of the Pantanal is that you can add in a trip to another nearby destination in the Central West such as Chapada dos Guimarães in Mato Grosso or Bonito in Mato Grosso do Sul. In the north, prices are a bit lower, but most people opt for the south if for no other reason than two-thirds of the Brazilian Pantanal is in Mato Grosso do Sul. Some people only spend a day or two just to see what it is like.

You should also plan your trip around the climate: the best time to go is during the dry season from May to about October. Wildlife viewing can be better during the wet season, bit it can also be miserably hot and rainy, and hard to arrange transportation and lodging. This is especially true in February or March.

Experienced outfitters that run Pantanal trips are listed in the Cuiabá section (see page 360). It is a good idea to book in advance, and you will generally have to pay a 30% deposit. While you can easily buy a Pantanal travel package outside of Brazil from a travel agent, contacting the local agencies and guides in this book directly might help you get a better deal.

When contracting a guide yourself, it is important to specify (in writing, if possible) such details as lodging, food, extra expenses, travel times, transfer from hotels or airports, air taxis, if there will be English-speaking guides or interpreters, etc. Also, you will have to plan your own air travel to Campo Grande or Cuiabá, but this can be arranged easily enough with domestic airlines listed in the front of this book.

Safety Tips

Yellow fever is uncommon, but vaccination is advised. You can reduce the risk by using mosquito repellent and, if you are camping, a mosquito net. Malaria has been eradicated here. Use guides registered with Embratur and local authorities listed in each chapter. Rescue teams exist, but you may be very far from help and your safety depends on using common sense. Driving without a guide can be risky, as the wetlands are literally a labyrinth of waterways, and even on paved roads wild animals can be a dangerous obstacle. Keep your distance from wildlife and remember that there are dangerous animals in the area. Vampire bats exist here and can carry rabies (though very rarely). Watch out as well for biting and stinging insects such as ants.

What to Bring

Lightweight, long-sleeved shirts and pants can provide relief from the mosquitoes. Mosquito repellent and mosquito coils at night help. Boots or sturdy tennis shoes are needed. During the summer, you will probably want cotton shorts and shirts, and long sleeves and pants for the evenings. Swimwear is needed at the *fazendas* (ranches). Raingear is a good idea, as is a brimmed hat, sunglasses and a sweater or jacket for the cooler season. Bring personal care, medicines, sunscreen, etc., as you can't buy much in the Pantanal. Also recommended is a still or video camera. You will be provided with a flashlight at night, but a strong electric lantern like a diving light might be a good thing to have.

Flora & Fauna

Tuiuiú

There is a higher concentration of wildlife here than practically anywhere else in South America, including the Amazon. Some belong just to the Pantanal and some are adapted to life in adjacent regions of the Central West.

Birds, especially waterfowl, are the most common wildlife, and are the easiest to spot. The immense long-legged ibis called the *tuiuiú*, with a white body, black head and beak, and a red stripe on its neck is the symbol of the region. But you will see countless other varieties such as herons, egrets, spoonbills, red and blue macaws (the latter are endangered and extremely rare), toucans, parrots, and birds of prey such as the snail-hawk with a specially adapted beak for extracting its own version of escargot. The sounds of the Pantanal are as amazing as the sights, and everywhere you go there is a symphony of birdcalls. Another famous creature here is the alligator, or *jacaré*, which emits a startling grunt when you get too near. At times they are virtually invisible as they float with only their nostrils out of the water. Once poached nearly to extinction, they have made a strong comeback with crackdowns on the illegal wildlife trade. At night, you can go out in a raft with a lantern and see their eyes glowing in the darkness. In some regions, you can feed them piranhas, their natural food, and these well-fed gators are very tame.

Piranha

(P. Thomas)

Be careful swimming in the Pantanal because of the piranhas, alligators and stingrays. Most of the creatures are not dangerous though. There are anacondas and lizards, such as the *víbora*, that can grow up to four feet long. Frogs and toads are also very common. Mammals that you might see include capybaras, otters, anteaters, deer and even jaguars (though they are rare now).

The flora here are also diverse, with some plants typical of the Amazon and others from the savannah. There are immense palms such as the *buriti*, which produces an edible fruit. On the hilly areas above the floodplains are flowering *ipês* (best seen from July to September), among other hardwoods. There are also giant *vitória-régia* lily pads similar to those in the Amazon.

Adventures on Land: Pantanal Ranches

The *fazendas* (or *pousadas*) are usually accessible by Jeep, but some require alternative transport. These are real, working farms and ranches that offer generally rustic but comfortable ranch-style lodging and a series of group activities you can choose from such as canoe or boat trips, alligator spotting, horseback riding, bird watching, piranha fishing, hikes, jeep safaris, or you can even try your hand at ranching. For convenience, simplicity, safety, and quality of travel, this is the best way to see the Pantanal.

Tours typically depart by bus from the cities with at least a couple of overnights at a *fazenda*. You could expect to pay $50-200 per person per night and more if you need to arrive by air taxi (some places cannot be reached by car). Note baggage weight may be severely limited on the small air taxis to some ranches.

There are literally dozens to choose from but here is a list of the best fazendas organized by region.

Ranches in Aquidauana

Refúgio Ecológico Caiman

(H. Palo)

The Aquidauana region includes the towns of Aquidauana, Miranda, and other smaller ones in the southwest of Mato Grosso do Sul near Bonito. The region extends from the Rio Negro to the Rio Miranda, with the Rio Aquidauana running through the middle. It is not all wetlands here – it borders the highlands that were covered in the Bonito chapter, and the wildlife is diverse. Access is easiest from Campo Grande. Following are the main ranches and *pousadas*.

★**Refúgio Ecológico Caiman** ($$$$) is 22 miles/37 km from Miranda on the way to Agachi. One of the best in the entire Pantanal, the huge ranch includes a private wildlife reserve and a blue macaw project. You have a choice of some long-distance trips if you want to really see the wetlands by horseback or Jeep. www.caiman.com.br, ☎ 67-687-2102 or 11-3079-6622.

Fazenda Rio Negro ($$$) is one of the oldest and most scenic with a 1920 ranch house near the Rio Negro. Conservation International has run it since 1999. It is about one hour by plane from Campo Grande on the Rio Negro (by Jeep only during the dry season). www.fazendarionegro.com.br/english, ☎ 67-326-0002.

Recanto Barra Mansa ($$$$) on the Rio Negro is surrounded by waterways and usually cannot be reached by land. The advantage here is that, since there are fewer visitors, you will get more personalized service. You may even see reclusive big cats that are almost impossible to spot elsewhere in the wild. You get here by a short air taxi trip from Campo Grande (by Jeep only in the dry season). There is information at www.hotelbarramansa.com.br or call ☎ 65-325-6807.

Fazenda São Francisco ($$) is the closest to Bonito, four or five hours by car on a scenic drive. This is one of Brazil's largest irrigated rice plantations with a lot to see nearby. On BR-262, 24 miles/40 km past the town of Miranda. ☎ 67-242-1088.

Ranches in Nhecolândia

Nhecolândia is the region north of the Rio Negro from Aquidauana to the Rio Taquari, encompassing the western portion of the Pantanal. The eastern portion can be reached from Campo Grande and here the upper Rio Taquari region is best known for its sport fishing, canoeing and other adventures – these tend to be deeper Pantanal adventures.

★**Pousada Arara Azul** ($$$) is near the Rio Negro on State Highway MS 184, at the 92 Km mark. It offers very comfortable lodging or camping and great wildlife. www.pousadaararaazul.com.br, ☎ 67-99787-1530 or 67-384-6114.

Baía dos Patos ($$) is flooded during the wet season by the Mangabal and Bugio rivers (on the eastern side of Nhecolândia). Maximum capacity is eight people so the adventures are customized. It's a five-hour trip overland by Jeep from Campo Grande (or one hour by air taxi), close to Pousada Mangabal. pousadabaiadospatos@terra.com.br, ☎ 67-326-8512.

Baía das Pedras ($$) is deep Pantanal on the banks of the Castelo lake in southeast Nhecolândia. There is room for eight people (two triple rooms and one double, each with private bath, air-conditioning, and fan). It takes about eight hours from Campo Grande (during the dry season only) or one hour by air taxi year-round, ☎ 67-356-1500.

Ranches in Poconé & Barão de Melgaço

Estância Ecológica Sesc-Pantanal

The northern section of the Pantanal ends at Poconé in Mato Grosso. The region covers the floodplains from the Rio Cuibá in the south to the Rio Paraguai on the northwest, including the Mato Grosso National Wetlands Park where the two main rivers converge. Access is possible overland from Cuiabá along the Transpantaneira Highway.

The Barão de Melgaço region borders this area on the east, with fields, floodplains, lakes, and waterfalls, and numerous archeological sites believed to be thousands of years old. Similar to the other regions, there are fewer options for adventures but it is cheaper.

★**Estância Ecológica Sesc-Pantanal** ($$$) is one of the better options, 27 miles/45 km from Poconé along a dirt road on the margins of the Rios Cuiabá and São Lorenço. This group of about a dozen ranches was converted to a massive wildlife preserve and is unusual for its thousands of tiny islands. Comfortable lodging is available. www.sescpantanal.com.br, ☎ 65-3688-2001.

Rio Mutum Lodge ($$$) is one of the best for bird watching and sport fishing in the northern Pantanal, in the Barão de Melgaço region. It can be reached via flights in and out of Cuiabá, or via transfer on a paved road to Barão de Melgaço and from there overland or on water to reach the lodge, all in about three hours. Access is via the Mimoso-Capoerinha Highway. ☎ 65-331-1223 or 65-623-7022.

Caracara Island Refuge ($$$$) is in the deep Pantanal on the banks of the Cuiabá river (near the Mato Grosso National Wetlands Park. Lodging is comfortable and there are spectacular wildlife spotting opportunities during the wet season. It is 150 miles/250 km from Cuiabá, either by air taxi, or to Porto Jofre on the Transpantaneira Highway, then down the Rio Cuiabá in a fast boat to the lodge. www.ilhadocaracara.com.br, ☎ 65-621-7719 or 31-3239-5656.

Hotel Fazenda Santa Teresa ($$) has good wildlife viewing opportunities in the dry season. There are indigenous archeological sites, and lts of wildlife to see along the Rio Pixaim. Rooms are very rustic but clean. It is 40 miles/67 km from Cuiabá on the Transpantaneira Highway. wes@ecodrama.com, ☎ 65-9971-9417.

Pousada Reserva Ecológica Jaguar ($), at the Jaguar Ecological Reserve, is a simple and rustic ranch. If you don't mind sacrificing a little bit of luxury, this is a good place to see wildlife, possibly even jaguars. Only groups of up to five are permitted. Access is by the Transpantaneira Highway, close to the border at the 112 Km mark. ☎ 65-345-1545.

Adventures on Water: Pantanal Fishing Lodges

The Pantanal is one of the best freshwater sport fishing regions in South America. Fishing lodges are essentially floating hotels that offer side-trips into the Pantanal to see the wildlife – the best have motorized rafts to reach the more isolated fishing spots. To fish here you will need a license from Ibama and fishing is prohibited from November to March. Boat operators and travel agenices can orient you. A week-long trip on one of the better lodges costs $2,000 per person.

Lodges in Corumbá

Most of the better lodges operate from Corumbá, a town in western Mato Grosso do Sul on the border with Bolívia. This is an out-of-the-way area served only by the local airline TAM (☎ 0300-123-100) with flights from Campo Grande. Corumbá has a few local historical sights but is not recommended for lengthy stays. Your lodge operator can assist you with arranging accommodations. Here are the best options:

Arara Tur operates the largest Pantanal fishing lodge, with three decks, suites with whirlpool baths and other luxuries. They are at Rua Manoel Cavassa, 47. Get in touch by Internet at www.araratur.com.br or at ☎ 67-231-4851 or 67-231-5888.

Raquel Tur operates a five-star lodge for 18 passengers. Their site is www.raqueltur.com, or by phone at ☎ 67-231-8522. Call for their address.

Pérola do Pantanal at Rua Manoel Cavassa, 255, has a lodge with a pool, wood-paneled cabins, air-conditioning, private bathrooms and motorized rafts. www.peroladopantanal.com.br. ☎ 67-231-1470 or 67-231-1460.

Lodges in Cáceres

There are also fishing lodges in Cáceres, a scenic town in the northenmost section of the Pantanal on the Paraguay River in Mato Grosso. There is an international Sport Fishing Tournament here every September – check with the Municipal Tourism Secretariat (☎ 65-223-0177) for details or e-mail sematur@caceres.mt.gov. Getting here takes an hour by bus from Cuiabá, and you can make arrangements with the travel agencies there.

Barco Hotel Santa Maria is a 122-foot boat with nine cabins and 24 bunks, dining room, television, DVD, and music, with eight motorized rafts. at Rua Boa Vista, no number. ☎ 65-223-6548.

Mato Grosso do Sul

Mato Grosso do Sul is south of the Pantanal. Two-thirds of the vast wetland region lies within its borders. Not unlike its neighbor Mato Grosso (the two were one state until 1979), the region is sparsely populated and mostly agricultural. The state, once peopled by the fierce *Terena* indigenous horsemen, has one of the largest cattle herds in the country and there is a distinct cowboy culture in the cities as well as the rural areas. It is also one of the most interesting states to visit due to its intriguing bio-diversity and natural wonders. **Bonito**, in the Serra de Bodoquena mountain range, is filled with crystal clear natural springs and limestone caverns. For sheer natural beauty and a wide range of things to do and see, the region is one of the most highly recommended destinations in this book. For sport fishing there are floating fishing "lodges," like hotels, that depart from Corumbá (see the *Pantanal Wetlands* section for details). Because the state is a bit remote, you will most likely have to fly first to **Campo Grande**, the capital, and from there take an air taxi or drive to your final destination. The culture and cuisine are similar to that in the rest of the Central West, with influences from Paraguay and the swamp-dwellers of the Pantanal.

Campo Grande

- Enjoy dining and nightlife on your way into the southern Pantanal
- A gateway to the Serra da Bodoquena region and Bonito
- Multiple options are available for purchase of indigenous arts

Campo Grande is the capital of Mato Grosso do Sul. The small but prosperous city is not worth a special trip but a stop here is likely on your way to and from the Pantanal and Bonito. There is plenty to keep you occupied. One of the things you may notice are the many tree-lined streets and the parks. The fertile local soil and fresh air are reminders of the great central plains nearby. Just a short drive from the city limits you will enter one of the most important soy and cattle regions in the world. Though modern, the city moves at the sleepy pace of a farm town. Things can get lively on the weekend nights, however.

A fairly recent town, it got started in 1872, when a caravan of migrant farmers from the Southeast Region built a ranch and homestead in what is today the city garden (called the *Horto Florestal*). Far from the rest of the country, the village didn't officially become a city until 1899 when the military adopted it as their command center for the western section of Brazil and set up an army base. When Mato Grosso do Sul state was broken off from Mato Grosso in 1977, the city became the capital. As elsewhere in the region, there is a visible indigenous presence in the town. In fact, in one neighborhood the grass huts were converted into brick houses styled after the indigenous homes. The city has a lot of culture because of its mix of Brazilian, indigenous, Paraguayan and Bolivian families and customs. The climate doesn't vary too much from season to season, with average temperatures around 68°F/20°C from November to March (the rainy summer season) and 82°F/28°C from July to August (the hot, dry winter season).

How to Get Here

There are various daily flights to and from major cities. The international airport (☎ 67-363-1322) is six minutes from downtown by car. Overland, it is about 14 hours from São Paulo (and costs around $50), and there are also buses to **Cuiabá** and **Bonito**. The **bus station** is at Rua Joaquim Nabuco, 200 (☎ 67-783-1678 or 67-382-9170). Take a **taxi** to and from the bus station at night as it's not a very safe area.

Air taxis are needed to get to many of the Pantanal ranches, generally costing about $100 per person. **Bom Bom** (☎ 67-741-4600), **Mato Grosso** (☎ 67-763-1264), or **Pantanal** (☎ 67-763-1293) are some options and there are others at the airport.

For More Information

The tourist hotline has information (☎ 67-324-5830). The main **Tourist Information Center** is at the Baís Residence (☎ 67-382-9244) – see *Sightseeing* below. There is an information booth at the airport.

Sightseeing

You can see the main attractions on a city tour by bus. Call for reservations (☎ 67-321-0800).

Morada dos Baís
Morada dos Baís

★Dating from 1912, the **Baís Residence** (Morada dos Baís) is the oldest two-story building in town, with a cultural center and art exhibitions. There is a good restaurant here to try regional-style cooking. At Avenida Noroeste, 5140, it's open 8 am-7 pm, except Sunday, when hours are 9 am-noon. ☎ 67-382-9200.

The **City Garden** (Horto Florestal) is a 14-acre/five-ha area with native species, an orchid house, library, arena, reflecting pool, and bike paths. At Rua do Parque, it's open from 5 am to 9 pm every day but Monday.

★The **Dom Bosco Museum** (Indigenous Museum) was originally started by missionaries, with exhibits of local fauna, indigenous artifacts from the *Xavante*, *Bororo*, *Moro*, and *Carajá* tribes, and other regional displays. It's at Rua Barão do Rio Branco, 1811. Open 8 am-6 pm on weekdays, on Saturday 8 am-5 pm, and on Sunday noon-6 pm. ☎ 67-721-1090. Entrance cost is under a dollar.

The **Indigenous Culture Memorial** (Memorial da Cultura Indígena) is the only urbanized indigenous village in Brazil, where brick houses are built in traditional grass-hut style. The memorial itself was built in bamboo and straw style with indigenous items for sale. It was closed at the time of writing, but with plans to re-open soon. At Aldeia Indígena Urbana Marçal de Souza in the Tiradentes neighborhood. Open 8-11:30 am and 1-5:30 pm on weekdays.

The **Indigenous Nations Park** (Parque das Nações Indígenous), at Avenida Afonso Pena, is a site where artifacts from pre-Colombian cultures were found. There are occasional shows and expositions here.

What to Buy

One of the best buys are the Kadiwéu ceramics, in multi-colored geometric patterns. Each is unique and colored with minerals found in the region. The Terena indians still make spears and bows and arrows for sale. Another symbol of the state is a squat, yellowish figurine called a *bugre*, made from a manioc stalk sold everywhere. Religious art is also popular, as are wood carvings of local wildlife. Another fun purchase is a *berrante*, a traditional trumpet made from a cattle horn.

Barroarte, at Avenida Afonso Pena, 4329 (☎ 67-724-1355) sells traditional Pantanal-style products and art. Open 9 am-10 pm except Monday.

The **Artisan House** (Casa do Artesão) is a state-sponsored cultural center in the 1929 bank offices in town (☎ 67-783-2633). This is the best place to find regional goods. At Avenida Calógeras, 2050. Open weekdays 8 am-6 pm and Saturday 9 am-5 pm.

There is an **Indigenous Fair** (Feira Indígena) at Praça Oshiro Takemori in the same square where the Municipal Market is located. Every day during the week you can buy indigenous items, herbal medicines, and artwork. It gets going around 6:30 am and ends 8 pm.

Where to Stay

Lodging in Campo Grande offers good value for the money and plenty of options are available. These are some of the preferred hotels:

Vale Verde ($) is close to the airport and a short a short cab ride from the nightlife, with comfortable rooms and a pool. It's on Avenida Afonso Pena, 106. ☎ 67-321-3355.

Hotel Advanced ($) is a budget hotel downtown with air-conditioning and 24-hour services. Some rooms are adapted for the physically impaired. Avenida Calógeras, 1909. ☎ 67-325-7744.

Buriti Suíte Hotel ($$) is a comfortable spot at Rua Antônio Maria Coelho, 2301. ☎ 67-321-2211.

Hotel Novotel ($$) has a fitness center and other amenities. Avenida Mato Grosso, 555, in Jardim Copacabana. ☎ 0800-703-7000 in Brazil or 67-326-1177.

Jandaia Hotel ($$) is the most comfortable option, with pool, lobby bar and other amenities. Avenida Barão do Rio Branco, 1271. ☎ 67-321-7000.

Where to Go Out

Campo Grande has basically two zones for bars and clubs, and things get going around 11 pm, especially on the weekends. One such zone is called **Cachoeirinha** (on and around Rua Anajás) – all taxi drivers know the places by name. There are two nightclubs next to each other: **Mr Dan** has electronic music and **Barfly** has blues and rock, with live shows Thursday through Sunday. Nearby on Rua Luciano Pacífico, there is **Cancun Music**, with electronic dance music, and across the street is **Cabral**, which plays Brazilian pop. Down the street is **Usina Music Place**, a big blue building with rock music. Not far from there is **Ilha de Chopp**, a beer hall at Avenida Afonso Penna in the Parque Avenida neighborhood.

Downtown is the other place to go. On the corner of Rua José Antônio and Rua Mariano Candido Rondon are two nightclubs: **Viena Rock**, with occasional live Brazilian pop, and **Seven Dancing Bar**, with Brazilian country music, pop, and electronic music. A couple of doors down, **Europa** bar attracts a young crowd. Within walking distance, a lot of people go to the corner of José Antonio and Rua Dom Aquino, where there is a cheap place called **Choppão** serving pizza and beer.

Where to Eat

Best bets are beef or regional cuisine from the Pantanal. Credit cards are not always accepted.

Khalil Karnes ($$) is a *rodízio*-style (all-you-can-eat) steakhouse open for lunch daily and dinner from Tuesday through Saturday. Rua Rubens Gil de Camilo, 142, in the Cachoerinha neighborhood. ☎ 67-326-3715.

Pantanal ($$) serves regional fish such as pintado, dourado, piraputanga and pacu. Rua Rui Barbosa, 1111, in the Monte Líbano neighborhood. ☎ 67-387-5677.

The **Pantaneira** ($$) is newer and serves a very good Pantanal-style buffet. Rua Dom Aquino, 2221, downtown. ☎ 67-383-8799.

Bonito

- One of Brazil's best ecological travel options
- Descend 250 feet on a cord and scuba dive in an underground lake
- Enjoy trails, caves, natural springs, snorkeling and rafting

Nestled between the rich farmland of southwestern Mato Grosso do Sul and the highlands of the **Serra Bodoquena** near the border with Paraguay, is the town called Bonito. Criss-crossed by rivers and unusual geological formations such as limestone caverns, underground lakes, sinkholes, and waterfalls, activities include cave exploration, snorkeling and scuba diving, rappelling, and rafting, with incredible wildlife observation opportunities.

Once part of Paraguay, the Bonito area holds on to its proud traditions, cuisine, music and customs, distinct from those in the rest of Brazil. While rustic and rugged, the area has been well developed for tourism over the past decade and its natural attractions have been meticulously preserved. The rivers here are unusual for their high concentration of lime and magnesium. These minerals cling to sediment and pull it down to the riverbed, leaving absolutely crystalline waters filled with fish. The waters display a sparkling mix of colors such as silver, white, gray, blue and aquamarine. Their mild temperatures are perfect for snorkling.

Buraco de Araras

The local caverns offer a stunning look into another world under the earth, with shady blue grottos where the remains of prehistoric animals have been discovered, and underground lakes so deep that no one has ever ventured to their farthest limits. You can scuba dive in the caves or in local rivers with natural springs. On land there are trails where you can visit waterfalls hidden in the highlands or observe wild peccaries, monkeys, tapirs, emus, and anteaters in their natural habitats. Nearby you can peer down into the **Buraco de Araras**, a hauntingly beautiful sinkhole home to dozens of rare scarlet parrots. The region combines unspoiled beauty with exceptionally good guide services, safety protocols, high-quality lodging and very good value. Dining and nightlife are limited, but don't miss the robust country meals served at rustic plantations. The name, which means "pretty" in Portuguese, is too modest – Bonito is one of the most rewarding areas to visit in all of Brazil.

How to Get Here

If there is one downside to the region it is the lack of transportation options. There are still so few visitors that no established commercial air routes into the Bonito airport exist. The best way to get here is by bus from Campo Grande. Buses leave Campo Grande at 6 am, 11 am and 3 pm, making the return trip from Bonito at 5:30 am, 12 am, and 4 pm. Local tour agencies can help arrange transportation to Bonito.

Getting Around

There are a few things to keep in mind about Bonito. First, all the activities in the region are ecologically protected and require a licensed guide (except the private parks with bathing areas, called *balneários*). Tennis shoes or light hiking boots are recommended, though on snorkeling adventures, special footwear is provided.

The climate is rainy and hot in the Brazilian summer, with high temperatures around 104°F/40°C and in the winter it is dry and cold with seasonal lows dropping to 41°F/5°C. The annual average temperature is around 72°F/22°C.

Another minor inconvenience is that local transportation can be expensive. Normally, your guide will organize the transport and simplify this for you, but, if you need them, there are moto-taxis, vans, bikes, and motorcycles for rent in town as well. From most hotels and pousadas, it is not very far to the restaurants, shops, bars and guide offices. Taxis are available on the main strip, Avenida Coronel Pilad Rebuá. Prices vary depending on the destination.

All of the attractions charge a fee, which helps preserve the area, and they limit the number of visitors per day to a sustainable amount. You need to schedule most activities 24 hours in advance, and as far ahead of time as possible for the busy seasons, from December 17-Carnival (February or March), Mar 25-27 (Catholic Holy Week), July 9-31, and Oct 8-12.

Local banks include **Banco do Brasil**, at Rua Luiz da Costa Leite, 2279, and **Bradesco**, at Rua Cel. Pilad Rebuá, 1759, with ATMs open from 7 am-9 pm. Banco do Brasil sells currency from 9 am-2 pm. Credit cards are increasingly accepted throughout the city, and MasterCard seems to be preferred here.

Bonito is one of the safest areas to travel in Brazil. Almost all the sites carry group insurance for travelers, which is rare for Brazil, and crime is rare.

If you want to hire an interpreter (not all the guides in town speak English) get in touch with **Kiko Azevedo** (☎ 67-9268-0762) – he's a friendly *paulistano* who has lived here for a long time.

For More Information

The local tour board, **Atratur**, is very well organized and provides helpful information, maps and brochures. The office is at Rua Cel Pila Rebua, 1186 (☎ 67-255-2245). They also publish the most recent prices on their Internet site: www.atrativosbonito.com.br.

Travel Agencies & Tour Guides

Guides are obligatory for most activities in Bonito, but there are a lot of choices. They can arrange all transport and hotels, and most operate in the Pantanal too in case you want to explore the famous wetlands of the region. Most of the them have Internet sites, and they all have offices conveniently located in town. Two highly recommended guides are **Martins** (☎ 67-255-2454), run by a former Secretary of Tourism in Bonito, and **Ederval Carbonaro** (☎ 67-9986-4024). **Ygarapé Tour** is recommended – they are at Rua Cel. Pilad Rebuá, 1853 (☎ 67-255-1733 or 67-255-1159). There are others with offices on the same street. Call the tour guide association (☎ 67-255-1837) for more information or to file any complaints.

Adventures

All of the adventures in Bonito are half-day or full-day trips, usually with a combination of different types of activities on land and water. Therefore they are grouped here according to the main activity, but keep in mind that most of the snorkeling tour guides, for instance, also offer hiking or other activities such as horseback riding. Some locations, such as the Abismo de Anhumas, involve rappelling, rafting and a choice between diving and snorkeling in an underground lake!

Adventures in Underground

The Bonito region is rich with limestone caverns dating back millions of years. Easily accessible, each of these caves is highly recommended.

★**Grutas de São Miguel** is a very well equipped, with a suspended walkway 550 feet/180 m long through the tree canopy above. At the main cavern you can see limestone formations and cave-dwelling owls,, and there is a bar and restaurant with electric carts available. This is a two-hour trip. Located on the highway toward Campo dos Indios, 9.6 miles/ 16 km from Bonito.

★★**Gruta do Lago Azul**, or the Blue Lagoon Cavern, has a steep but short trail that leads 100 yards down to an immense cavern mouth.

Some 290 feet/90 m deep, it is said to be one of the largest flooded caves anywhere in the world. You need to be careful as limestone trail in the cavern can be very slick and damp, but you should by all means go to see the view of the blue lake under the stalactites.

From December to January (the rainy season, unfortunately), every day between 8 and 9 am, there is a shaft of light that blazes into the water and lights up the cave in an incredibly colorful spectacle. Jacques Cousteau once dove here but it is now closed to swimming – explorers discovered an underwater passage believed to lead to an underground river.

There is no evidence that Pre-Colombian people lived here but the bones of prehistoric creatures such as a saber-toothed tiger were found, as well as the skeleton of a modern man, who presumably was thrown here to hide the body.

The cave is on the Campos dos Índios Highway, 12 miles/20 km from Bonito.

One of the most spectacular adventures in Brazil is the ★★★**Anhumas Abyss** (Abismo de Anhumas). Located in the forest, you reach the cave by rapelling down through an immense crack into the darkness. Once a local curiosity, the cave was explored several years ago by some adventurers, who were amazed at what they found.

About 250 feet down, there is a subterranean lake with weird rock formations lit by a shaft of light that filters through the mouth of the cave.

Rappelling down is not especially difficult but going back up can be strenuous. All the outfitters will train you for about an hour the day before the trip and, only if you can master the basic skills (which are really not hard), can you go on the trip. As you descend about 10 feet , the initial shaft widens and you drop down into the cool, multihued gallery over the lake.

The only creatures in the water are minnows near the platform and some blind albino shrimp. You have the option of scuba diving (see *Diving*, below), which is recommended. If you are not a diver, you can snorkel in the water to get a close look at the limestone cones and intricate formations under the surface. All gear is provided.

On the third part of the trip, you take an inflatable raft to see and even touch some of the limestone formations, entering other galleries connected to the main cavern.

To exit, you will once again strap into the rappel harness and inch your way up to the top using special equipment. It does require physical exertion and you will be required to learn the technique the night before. Keep in mind that the cave is five or six times as high as the training platform, and you should wear lightweight long pants and heavy socks to avoid rope burn.

The English-speaking instructors are friendly, helpful and happy to answer any questions. The entrance to the cave is reached via a short forest trail off the Campo dos Índios Highway (at the Fazenda Jaraguá), about 13 miles/22 km from Bonito.

★**Buraco de Araras** is a geological formation called a sinkhole, 35 miles/58 km from Bonito at Fazenda Alegria, on BR-267 (toward Jardim). A fascinating natural phenomenon, the immense reddish pit formed when limestone caves below the earth collapsed, it is 400 feet/124 m deep and 1,600 feet/500 m in diameter, making this the second-largest sinkhole in the world.

Dozens of scarlet parrots roost in the shady spots of the cliffs and spiral around the walls, seeking an updraft to lift their comparatively heavy bodies out of the pit. Outside they forage and return to the sinkhole for safety from other predators.

The ecosystem of the sinkhole is unique. At the bottom is a murky pool surrounded by trees and vegetation. The pool contains two alligators who feed on fish or birds, and nobody knows how they got there. One theory is that the eggs washed down the cliff during a rainstorm. These two will eventually produce offspring, who eventually eat one another in the small ecosystem until only two survive, a male and a female.

All around the opening are observation points perfect for wildlife photography, and the path has curious plantlife such as "alligator trees," with bark like an alligator's skin, wild pineapples and the noisy birds called *gralhas,* who feed on the fruit. If you look carefully, you can see coffee plants brought here by settlers and a fruit called *lobeira* that is eaten by the guara-wolf. The plant is found everywhere in their habitat because the seeds are distributed in their scat.

There is a small gift shop and snack bar on site. While the site is very interesting, infrastructure is a bit limited. A guide will walk with you out along a little trail where you can look down into the sinkhole from various vantage points. Unfortunately, the guide may not speak any English, but the walk is not difficult.

☞ Note, descent into the sinkhole is prohibited – all visits are on the top.

Adventures on the Water

Rafting & Tubing

Tubing down the ★**Rio Formoso**, through three waterfalls and two rapids, takes 40 minutes. The surrounding vegetation is filled with wildlife, and the return to the **Hotel Cabanas** ranch is along suspended trails through the forest. The ranch is 3.6 miles/ six km from Bonito, on the Estrada Bonito-Balneário Municipal, at the 6 Km marker. ☎ 67-255-3013.

Rafting with Hotel Fazenda Cachoeira

Hotel Fazenda Cachoeira has rafting and natural pools for swimming, horseback riding and trails. It is about six miles/ 10 km from Bonito, with comfortable lodging here as well if you want. www.hotelfazenda-cachoeira.com.br.

Fazenda Segredo has a trip, about six miles/10 km from the city, where you descend three waterfalls along four miles/ seven km of river in about two hours. Afterwards you can take a swim. There is also horseback riding. www.pousadasegredo.com.br.

Projecto Vivo is a ranch with an overnight option where you can raft down the Rio Formoso all the way to Rio Miranda. It's nine miles/31 km from Bonito, on the highway toward Ilha do Padre. The visit takes a full day. www.projectovivo.com.br.

Snorkeling

Floating down the crystalline rivers of the region is one of the best adventures in Bonito. You will be provided with all equipment and rubber boots or sandals for walking through the forest. Suntan lotion and mosquito repellent is prohibited to protect the fish, and you should not touch the riverbed so as to avoid disturbing the mineral sediment. The temperature is an agreeable 72°F/22°C and there are an amazing number of large river fish. Any one or all of these trips is worthwhile. For more suggestions see the scuba diving section.

★★★**Recanto Ecológico Rio da Prata** is a ranch about 32 miles/54 km from Bonito on BR-267 (toward Jardim). This is a nature preserve filled with wildlife. The river is the longest and deepest*(where? in Brazil? in this area? what river is it?). At the ranch a delicious lunch is served with optional horseback riding. If you opt for only one snorkeling adventure, Rio da Prata is the best choice.

Similar but smaller is ★★**Reserva Ecológica Baía Bonita**, 4.2 miles/seven km from Bonito on BR-267 (toward Jardim). You will see over 30 species of fish. At the end of the visit there are waterfalls and a trapeze to drop down into the refreshing green pool. There is a trail on the grounds where you can see alligators, guara-wolves, and a serpent house. A restaurant and pool are here as well, and the trip is highly recommended.

You can also snorkel the ★★**Rio Sucuri**. On the trail through the forest you can see wildlife and natural springs bubbling out of the ground. The snorkeling here is a bit more adventurous because of a few places with shallow rocks or overhanging branches. There are surprisingly large schools of fish, and the scenery around the river is beautiful. It is 11 miles/18 km from Bonito on the highway toward São Geraldo.

★**Bonito Aventura** starts with a botanical and wildlife trail, then you snorkel down the Rio Formoso, similar to the other rivers of the region. There are more rapids, which are the best part, and quite a few branches dipping into the water along the way. See www.bonitoaventura.com.br for more information. It is 3.6 miles/six km from Bonito, on BR-267 (toward Jardim).

Rio Sucuri snorkeling trip

★Scuba Diving

Bonito is one of the best freshwater diving locations in South America.

You have a choice of very shallow river dives all the way up to technical cave diving. If you have never gone diving in fresh water, remember that you are less buoyant than in salt water. For the cave dives, you need a 5 mm suit and perhaps a hood, as the water is cold, but the rivers need only a 3 mm suit at most. In the caves you are asked not to disturb the sediment and not to urinate.

All gas mixes are available in Bonito and for some of the dives cave certification is required (these were closed at time of writing but could reopen). For the river dives, snorkling is probably just as enjoyable because you have more freedom of movement. Dive operators can be arranged through the travel agencies, above.

Rio da Prata
(G. Siqueira)

For river diving you have a choice of **Rio Formoso** or **Rio da Prata**. Rio Formoso is up to 20 feet deep, with very mild currents and 50 feet visibility. Temperatures are around 72°F/22°C, depending on the season. Rio da Prata is similar, with visibility up to 100 feet and depth around 23 feet. Either dive takes about 35 minutes.

For lake diving there are two shipwrecks at **Praia de Figueiredo**, but the visibility is poor. One is a 48-foot boat you can enter and the other is a small airplane. Both are at a depth around 20 feet. The temperature is about 73°F/23°C year-round.

★★★**Anhumas Abyss** (Abismo de Anhumas) is an underground lake (no cave certification required) where you have to rappel down before diving to a depth of up to 60 feet to see limestone formations. You will need a lantern, but visibility is around 100 feet. Guides haul your equipment and you follow a specific circuit marked by a cord underwater The lake is about 250 feet deep but has a cavern going deeper that has never been fully explored. The temperature is 65°F/18°C. See more about this site in the caves section above.

Waterfalls

The region's topography lends itself to hikes and waterfalls, and this is one of the most enjoyable options in Bonito. Each of the following locations has a ranch house with good facilities and all the hikes require guides – get in touch with the tour agencies in town.

One of the best locations is ★★★**Boca da Onça** with trails and falls near the Rio Salobra and a cattle plantation. It takes about three hours to reach the 512-foot/156-m main waterfall on trails through the forest after arriving by Jeep. At 33 miles/55 km from town (in the Bodoquena city limits), it is one of the more distant locations, but highly recommended. You can hike up to the top if you want but it is strenuous. Along the way you can swim in the river that runs through a steep canyon, and you also have an option of rappeling nearby. Afterwards, enjoy lunch and have a swim in a black rock pool fed by a natural spring.

Another highly recommended attraction is the ★★**Estância Mimosa**, with emerald pools under waterfalls, trails through the forest and places to swim. One of the most intriguing parts of the trip is the chance to see dried-up riverbeds 10 feet high with layers of sediment calcified by minerals in the water. One of the swimming spots is called "grotto of desire" with an unusual cylindrical rock formation. Horseback riding is available here too. After the adventures, have lunch at the ranch house and relax in a hammock amid the gorgeous scenery. The ranch is 14 miles/24 km from Bonito. See their site at www.estanciamimosa.com.br.

★**Cachoeiras do Aquidabã** has 11 waterfalls, including one 400 feet/120 m high. There is an incredible view of the Serra de Bodoquena and the beginnings of the Pantanal Wetland floodplains. It is also unique for its mix of ecosystems and a small section of a Kadiweu indigenous reservation. To get to the falls, you have to hike about a mile along a river, where you can swim in natural pools. The site is 29 miles/48 km from Bonito, on the highway toward Campo dos Índios.

★**Cachoeiras do Rio do Peixe** is part of the Água Viva Ranch, one of the most beautiful settlements in the region. This is a great option for its scenic trails, glassy rivers and swimming in the natural pools teeming with fish. In the forest there are exotic species such as monkeys, macaws and toucans. After the adventure, enjoy a regional-style lunch at the ranch house. Located 21 miles/35 km from Bonito, on the highway to Bodoquena.

★**Ceita Corê** in the Tupi language means "land of my sons." At this site, there is a two-hour trail through dense forest to the waterfalls. Along the way there are natural pools and crystal-clear springs and grottoes in the limestone. Horseback riding is an option, and afterwards you can enjoy lunch at the magnificent old ranch house. The ranch is 22 miles/36 km from Bonito, on the highway to Porto Murtinho.

The name ★**Eno Bókoti** is another Indian word meaning "many waterfalls." At this site there is a mile-long trail through the forest along the Rio do Peixe where you can swim. There are towering trees hundreds of years old and colorful birds. Snorkeling is an option here with scenery that is quite different from the snorkeling locations described above. There are good facilities here, with decks, walkways, a suspension bridge, trampoline, trapeze and a natural rock beach. Enjoy lunch at the ranch house. The ranch is 19 miles/32 km from Bonito.

THE KADIWÉU NATION

In 1672 the Guaicuru indigenous tribes managed to obtain horses from the Spanish colonists and used them to take over new lands. Quickly dominating the art of horseback riding, these warrior tribesmen spread out over a large territory from the east of the Pantanal to modern day Bolivia and from the north of Paraguay all the way to Cuiabá. With the new mounts, they easily dominated the other indigenous tribes in the region and enslaved them. The Portuguese Crown soon caught on to the advantages of an alliance and enlisted these fierce warriors to serve alongside Brazilian troops in the bloody war with Paraguay. The warriors won the war but it thinned out their population and their nation was permanently weakened. Today the descendents of this proud nomadic hunting tribe are called the Kadiwéu and they inhabit a single village in the region of Bodoquena and Porto Murtinho, in Mato Grosso do Sul. They survive by ranching and agriculture, though these are not traditional activities for the tribe – but their ceramics are. Considered one of the most important indigenous art forms in Brazil, their pottery is made from powdered bone, clay and other broken ceramics, and then "painted" in the kiln with mineral pigments found only in the region. Their colorful geometric designs are highly prized and each piece is unique. You can purchase this pottery at shops in town or in Campo Grande.

Where to Eat

O Casarão ($$$) is a simple but good fish restaurant with a rodízio-style all-you-can-eat option and self-service. They also serve meat dishes. Open for lunch and dinner at Rua Cel. Pilad Rebuá, 1835. ☎ 67-255-1970.

Tapera ($$$) has a very good lunch buffet ($$) and during the evenings you can enjoy live *boleros*, sung in Paraguayan style with harp and guitar. The owner, Tô, is concerned about ecology and serves low-environmental impact fruits for dessert. Rua Cel. Pilad Rebuá, 1961.

Where to Stay

Except during Carnival and holidays, there is good availability. Lodging offers excellent value, with lots of options – it pays to shop around for the best deal. Prices rise around 25% on busy holidays. Here are some suggestions.

Hotel Pousada Águas de Bonito ($$) is about 1,000 yards from the center of town in a green space with full services including restaurant and bar. Rua 29 de Maio, 1679. ☎ 67-255-2732.

Hotel Pirá Miúna ($$) is one of the newest and nicest in town offering great value. ☎ 67-255-1058.

Hotel Paraíso de Águas ($) is a centrally located hotel with air-conditioning, heated pool, steam sauna, bar, and an ample breakfast. Avendia Cel. Pilad de Rebuá, 1884. ☎ 67-255-1296.

Hotel Pousada Águas de Bonito

Hotel Refúgio ($) has simple but comfortable accommodations, with air-conditioning. Near the center of town at Rua Nossa Senhora da Penha, 366. ☎ 67-255-1570.

Marruá Hotel ($$) has clean and comfortable rooms with balconies, workout room, children's and adult's pools, and a convenience store. Rua Joana Sorta, 1173. ☎ 67-255-1040.

Olho d'Água ($$) is a comfortable hotel with good service at State Highway MS-382 (no number). ☎ 67-255-1974.

The **Wetega Hotel** ($$$) is one of the nicest, with breakfast and dinner included. It's at Avenida Cel. Pilad de Rebuá, 679. wetegahotel@bonito.com.br.

Just on the outskirts of the main road through town but close enough to walk is the **Zagaia Eco Resort Hotel** ($$-$$$), which has a pool, dry sauna, and other amenities. Rodovia Três Morros Km 0, at the far end of Avenida Cel. Pilad de Rebuá. ☎ 67-255-1280.

About 15 minutes from the town, is **Rio Formoso Hotel Fazenda** ($$), a ranch-style spot with pool and deck on the Rio Formoso, rafting, horseback riding and wildlife trails.

Zagaia Eco Resort Hotel

Rodovia do Turismo, at the 11 Km marker. ☎ 67-235-1556.

What to Buy

$ Along the main road, Cel. Pilad Rebuá, in Bonito, there are arts and crafts shops open day and night. The one that focuses most on indigenous arts, especially Kadiwéu pottery, sculpture, spears, and other items is **Além da Arte Artesanatos e Decoração** at Rua Pilad Rebuá, 1966 (☎ 67-255-1485), but you can find others. Many of the ranches and ecological tourism destinations listed in this chapter also have shops with locally produced goods.

Central Highlands: Brasília & the Cerrado

At the center of Brazil is a region called the Cerrado, Brazil's second-largest ecosystem after the Amazon systems. Like all of the central west, this region of highlands and savannahs is sparsely populated and a bit remote, with amazing biodiversity.

In the rolling hills of the savanna, hundreds of thousands of wildlife species depend on the constant presence of the ground water along the flood plains formed by the run-off from the moist Amazon river basins. For this reason, much of the wildlife tends to be found close to the river basins.

Even in the extreme dry season from May to September, there is ground water to support life in this seemingly parched patch of land.

This section of the Central West is well known for ecological tourism, but there has been some damage to the local environment due to the expansion of cattle ranching and agriculture in recent years, with a corresponding effort to preserve the wildlife.

Still, it has many excellent destinations for ecological travel, chiefly in the beautiful highland plateaus, at **Chapada dos Veadeiros** and the surrounding region, or the grassy **Emas National Park**, both in the state of **Goiás**. While few in number, these destinations are some of the most interesting spots to visit in Brazil for natural beauty and wildlife observation.

There are memorable sights here such as the luminous termite mounds covering the landscape at certain times of year, or the blazing sunsets over the grasslands.

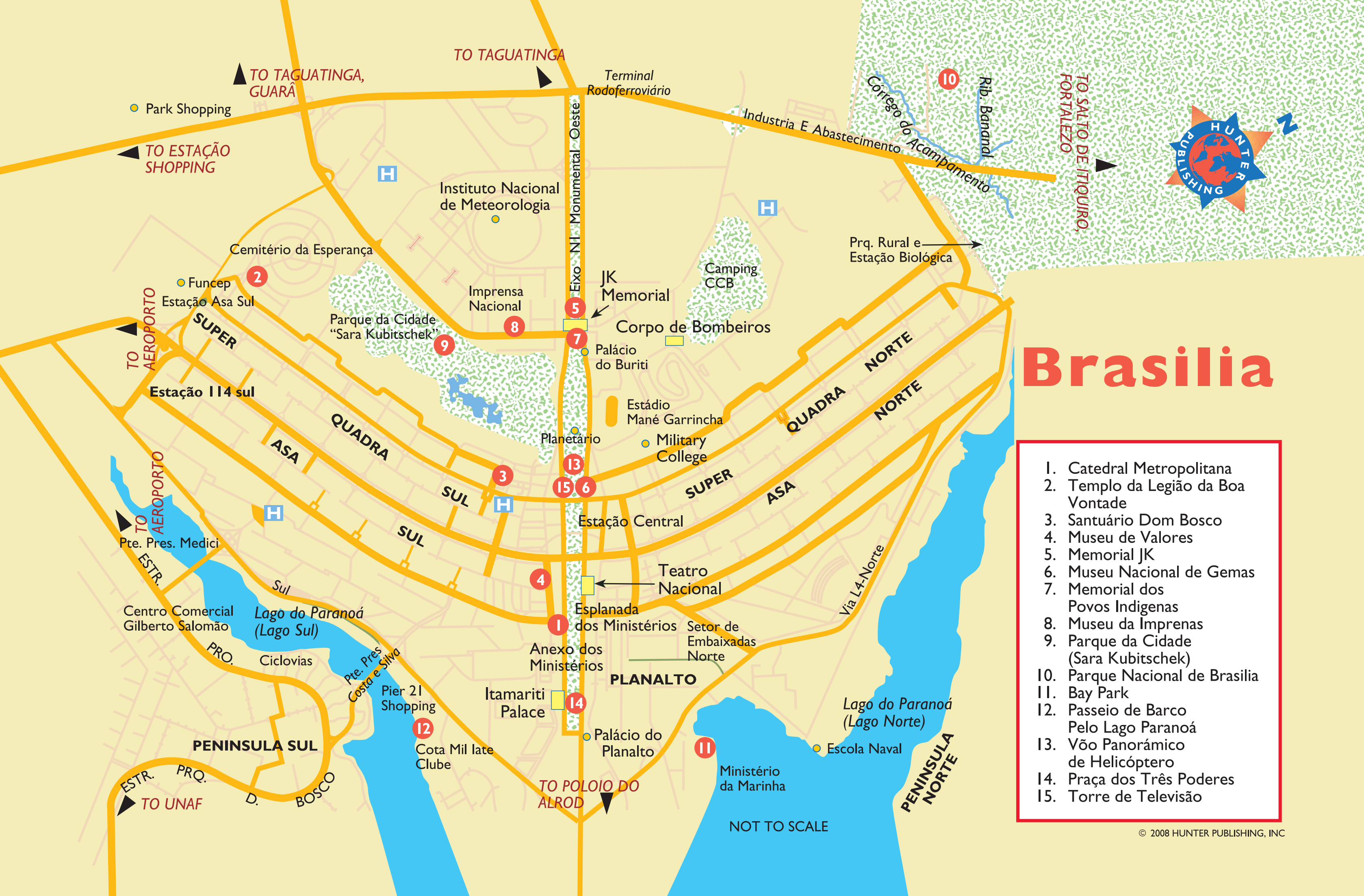
The main point of entry to the region, and by far the most interesting city for culture and nightlife, is **Brasília** and the **Federal District**, which is entirely surrounded by the state of Goiás. Brasília is commonly a layover on trips from the Southeast to the Amazon in the North, and you might consider spending a day here on your way through to look around.

Brasília & the Federal District

- Visit Brazil's modern architectural masterpiece
- Enjoy native Cerrado landscapes in the local parks
- Take advantage of the capital's shops and restaurants

Brazil's capital city was founded in 1960, when the federal government decided to move from Rio de Janeiro to Brasília in the central highland plains. This modern city is filled with plenty to see for architecture buffs, but is not without its controversy. Once considered a soulless place in the middle of nowhere, even the public servants used to rush back to their home states as much as possible for long weekends and holidays. Brasília today, though, has its first generation of locals, who have humanized the town and made it more fun in areas once frequented only by politicos and power brokers.

It was built at a marathon pace by the architects Oscar Niemeyer and Lúcio Costa, with big international loans obtained by President Juscelino Kubitschek. Brasília's "pilot plan" for some was a leap forward into the modern world and for others was an extravagant display of bravado. Brasília still empties out when the political machine shuts off for the weekend, turning entire sectors of the city into virtual ghost towns filled with parks and beautiful architecture. Travel here can be a little surreal, with compartmentalized zones for government offices, monuments, leisure areas and residents, according to precisely what cog they represent in the government apparatus. You probably won't want to make a special trip here, but it's worth a look on your way to the other destinations described in this chapter. The city of two million peo-


Brasilia
1. Catedral Metropolitana
2. Templo da Legião da Boa Vontade
3. Santuário Dom Bosco
4. Museu de Valores
5. Memorial JK
6. Museu Nacional de Gemas
7. Memorial dos Povos Indigenas
8. Museu da Imprenas
9. Parque da Cidade (Sara Kubitschek)
10. Parque Nacional de Brasilia
11. Bay Park
12. Passeio de Barco Pelo Lago Paranoá
13. Vôo Panorámico de Helicóptero
14. Praça dos Três Poderes
15. Torre de Televisão
NOT TO SCALE
TO TAGUATINGA
TO TAGUATINGA, GUARÁ
Park Shopping
TO ESTAÇÃO SHOPPING
Terminal Rodoferroviário
Industria E Abastecimento
Corrego do Acampamento
Rib. Bananal
TO SALTO DE ITIQUIRO, FORTALEZO
Prq. Rural e Estação Biológica
Instituto Nacional de Meteorologia
Eixo N1 Monumental Oeste
Cemitério da Esperança
Funcep
Estação Asa Sul
TO AEROPORTO
SUPER
QUADRA
ASA
SUL
Estação 114 sul
Imprensa Nacional
Parque da Cidade "Sara Kubitschek"
JK Memorial
Camping CCB
Corpo de Bombeiros
Palácio do Buriti
Estádio Mané Garrincha
Planetário
Military College
NORTE
Estação Central
Teatro Nacional
Esplanada dos Ministérios
Setor de Embaixadas Norte
Via L4-Norte
Anexo dos Ministérios
PLANALTO
Itamariti Palace
Palácio do Planalto
TO POLOIO DO ALROD
Ministério da Marinha
Lago do Paranoá (Lago Norte)
Escola Naval
PENINSULA NORTE
Pte. Pres. Medici
ESTR.
Centro Comercial Gilberto Salomão
Lago do Paranoá (Lago Sul)
Ciclovias
PRO.
Pte. Pres Costa e Silva
Pier 21 Shopping
Cota Mil Iate Clube
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ple is in a semi-arid tropical savanna climate, with the hottest period September and the coolest in July. Bring comfortable shoes, light clothes, sunscreen, and a hat in the summer when it gets hot and humid. In the winter it can be cold and very dry.

How to Get Here

Getting here by plane can be difficult on Mondays and Tuesdays, when workers flood in, and the reverse is true on Thursdays and Fridays as they flood back out. The **Brasília International Airport** is about six miles from the city, with bus and taxi service into town (a taxi takes about 15 minutes, a bus 30 minutes).

The capital is linked by highway to the following cities: **Belém** (BR 010), **Fortaleza** (BR 020), **Salvador** (BR 030), **Belo Horizonte** and **Rio de Janeiro** (BR 040), **São Paulo** (BR 040 and BR 050), **Campo Grande** (BR 060), and **Cuiabá** (BR 070). You can take a comfortable executive bus from any of these cities, though it may be a long trip.

Getting Around

A rental car or taxi will be needed, but the subway and bus system are useful in some parts of town. If you drive, watch your speed (40-80 km/24-48 miles per hour) because there are photographic speed traps all over that can result in a nasty bill when you return your car. Parking is abundant, but so are the illicit street "guardians" called *flanelinhas* who charge you to park.

For rentals, try **Avis** (☎ 61-365-2782), **Hertz** (☎ 0800-147300), **Interlocadora** (☎ 61-365-2544), **Localiza** (☎ 0800-312121) or **Unidas** (☎ 61-344-6465), all with offices at the airport.

Taxis have stands on the major thoroughfares (near the main tourism sites), costing less than $10 per average ride. For costlier radio taxis that come to you, try **Brasília Radiotaxi** (☎ 61-344-3060), **Central Taxi** (☎ 61-322-3003), **Radiotaxi Alvorada** (☎ 61-322-8080), **Radiotaxi Capital** (☎ 61-581-2700) or **Radiotaxi Turismo** (☎ 61-325-3030).

For air taxis, useful for flying to Emas National Park, you can try **Brasília Taxi Aéreo** (☎ 61-365-1121) at the Setor Hangares, Box 14, **Transamérica Taxi Aéreo** at Hanger 22 (☎ 61-365-1017) or **Vega** at Hanger 26 (☎ 61-365-1615).

Understanding Brasília is easier when you can decipher the acronyms used to name different parts of town but you will have to speak a little Portuguese to figure them out ("Setor Comercial Norte-SCN," "Setor de Diversão de Sul-SDS," "Setor dos Hotéis do Sul-SHS," "Setor de Embaixadas de Norte-SEN," and so on).

The city is laid out on the inside of a bow-shaped lagoon, with two main strips like a cross. The strip perpendicular to the lagoon is straight, running east-west, and is called the Eixo Monumental. This is where the monuments are. Crossing it is a curved axis hugging the shape of the lagoon called Eixo Rodoviário Norte (North) and Eixo Rodoviário Sul

(South), depending on what side of the Eixo Monumental you are on. The effect is like a plane or a bird flying toward the lake and each side is called an *Asa*, or "wing" – Asa Norte and Asa Sul.

For currency exchange and withdrawals, there is a **Banco HSBC** at the SCRS sector, Bloco A, in the basement (☎ 61-321-1984), a **Banco Bradesco** at Setor Comerical Sul, Qd. 2, bloco B on the second floor (☎ 61-218-1116), a **Banco do Brasil** at the airport (☎ 61-365-1183) and a **Citibank** at Setor Commercial Sul, Qd. 6, bloco A, shop 186 (☎ 61-215-8000), all with ATMs or currency exchange desks. **Air Brazil Turismo** (☎ 61-322-8822) handles exchange at Setor Hoteleiro Sul, Qd 1, Bloco A, shops 33/4, in the Hotel Nacional, as does **Kammoun Câmbio** (☎ 61-321-1983) at Setor Hoteleiro Sul, Qd. 3, Bloco J, in the Hotel Continental.

Unlike São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro, Brasília uses 220 volt electrical currents, so you may need an adapter.

For More Information

The **Adetur** tourist board has an information office at the Eixo Monumental (Convention Center), open weekdays 9 am-5 pm (☎ 61-325-5730). You can also try the information booth at the airport from 7 am to 11 pm. A very useful website with info about the government offices in English is **www.dicasdebrasília.com.br**. You can also find out about the city from the UNESCO World Heritage page at **www.worldheritagesite.org/sites/brasilia.html**.

BRAZIL'S MOST FAMOUS ARCHITECT

Oscar Niemeyer is an unusual and revered figure in Brazil. Born in Rio de Janeiro in 1907, Niemeyer began his stellar career in 1936 as an unpaid intern for a local architectural firm. He went on to become the chief architect and designer of Brasília, along with urban planner Lucio Costa, who helped develop his budding talent. An avowed Communist and supporter of Cuba, Niemeyer through his life built up a reputation as an eccentric and charismatic figure, who somehow managed to seclude himself from the press. The most prolific architect in Brazil, and the best known, his modern, spacious structures with simple lines are praised in Brasília for their elegance and formality, and these works are studied around the world. In addition to Brasília, for which he is best known (the **Alvarado Palace**, the **Planalto Palace**, and the **University of Brasília** were his, among many others), Niemeyer also helped build the image of Rio de Janeiro as a modern and sophisticated city with such structures as the tulip-shaped **Museum of Contemporary Art** in Niterói. His works have a distinct and humanistic feel to them, creates the sense that you are walking through a masterpiece of art.

Sightseeing

If you enjoy architecture there is plenty to see in Brasília. There are countless sculptures, monuments, parks, and pools. Here are the highlights.

Museums

Oscar Niemeyer Space (Espaço Oscar Niemeyer) at the Plaza of the Three Powers Lote 7 (☎ 61-224-3255) is an architectural research and memorial center dedicated to Oscar Niemeyer. Open weekdays 10 am-6 pm, closing for lunch 12 am-2 pm.

Lucio Costa Space (Espaço Lucio Costa) in the basement of the Plaza of the Three Powers (☎ 61-321-9843) preserves the memory of the city's famed urban planner, with photos and mock-ups he used. Opens weekdays 9 am-6 pm.

Juscelino Kubitscheck Memorial (Memorial JK) at the Eixo Monumental Oeste (Praça do Cruzeiro) houses the mortal remains of the president who built Brasília. The main feature is the 90-ft/28-m pedestal and statue. Open Tuesday through Sunday 9 am-5:45 pm. ☎ 61-321-6778.

Armaments Museum (Museu de Armas) has a collection of foreign and domestic weapons. At the Centro Administrativo de Taguatinga, Área Especial 1, Projeção L (☎ 61-371-3335). Open weekdays 8 am-6 pm, closed 12 am-2 pm.

Brasília Art Museum (Museu de Arte de Brasília) has modern and contemporary works at SHTN, Lote 2 (☎ 61-325-6242). Open Tuesday through Friday 9 am-6 pm.

Northeastern Art and Traditions Museum (Museu de Arte e Tradições do Nordeste) has a display on the culture of the Brazilian northeast. At SGAN, quadra 910, conjunto F (☎ 61-272-3833). Open daily 8 am-5 pm, closed 12 am-1 pm.

Cerrado Museum (Museu do Cerrado), in a nature preserve at SAIN, Parque Rural, has taxidermy displays of wildlife, local flora from the savanna, and a Japanese garden. Open weekdays in the mornings, 7:30-10:30 am. ☎ 61-274-9608.

Indigenous Peoples Museum (Museu dos Povos Indígenas) at Eixo Monumental Oeste has a collection of artifacts from Brazilian indigenous groups. Open Tuesday through Friday 9 am-6 pm and weekends 11 am-5 pm. ☎ 61-223-3760.

Government Buildings

Visits are normally welcomed for architectural sightseeing at the following government centers, but ceremonies can cause interruptions. If you only have one day, explore along the Eixo Monumental where the following buildings are located.

The **National Congress** (Congresso Nacional), at the Esplanada dos Ministérios, Plaza of the Three Powers, has guided visits every hour, and is considered one of the most famous landmarks in the city.

The **Alvarado Palace** (Palácio da Alvorada) at SHTN (Lago Norte) on the Plaza of the Three Powers is the official residence of the President, with a changing of the guard every two hours. The palace is also a sanctuary for different kinds of birds from the Cerrado. The building is covered in marble and glass, with white semi-circular buttresses.

The **Foreign Ministry Palace** (Palácio do Itamarati) has guided visits on weekdays 3-5 pm and on weekends 10 am-2 pm, with a glimpse at the sumptuous furnishings and antiques. There are mirrored pools outside, designed by Oscar Niemeyer and reflecting the arches and gardens of Burle Marx. It is on the Esplanada dos Ministérios. ☎ 61-411-6640.

The **Justice Palace** at the Esplanada dos Ministérios is another Niemeyer project with ledges that pour curtains of water, said to be "tears of envy" for the better-looking Foreign Ministry Palace in front. ☎ 61-312-7000.

The **Buriti Palace** at the Eixo Monumental Oeste is the government palace of the Federal District. The building, designed by Mauro Jorge Esteves, has gardens with statues. Open weekdays 8 am-6 pm. ☎ 61-316-4111.

Planalto Palace

(U. Rosenheck)

The **Planalto Palace** (Palácio do Planalto) is the administrative palace of the President, with changing of the guards every two hours. ☎ 61-411-2317.

There are many famous examples of architecture at the **Setor de Embaixadas**. This is where the embassies are. You can explore for several hours and admire the buildings – the Spanish, German, Italian, Mexican and Portuguese Embassies are especially noteworthy.

Another good place to wander is the **University of Brasília** (Universidade de Brasília) with its pleasant landscaped campus designed by Oscar Niemeyer, considered one of his greatest works. It is just 15 minutes by car from the Eixo Monumental.

Other Sights

The **Dom Bosco Sanctuary** (Santuário de Dom Bosco) is an arched temple designed by Carlos Alberto Naves in honor of the 19th-century mystic Dom Bosco, who is famous for his esoteric vision of a spiritually significant city on the 15th Parallel. Burle Marx designed the gardens. W3 Sul, Quadra 702.

The **Dom Bosco Pyramid** (Ermida de Dom Bosco) is a tiny chapel at the Paranoá Lagoon. It marks the 15th Parallel where Dom Bosco predicted that a great new civilization would arise. There's a nice view here. Access is via Lago Sul and the Parque Dom Bosco Highway.

The **Metropolitan Cathedral** is one of the most famous Brasília landmarks designed by Oscar Niemeyer, with a splendidly beautiful blue and white ceiling, stained glass, suspended angel figures, four bronze statues by Alfredo Ceschiatti, and panels by DiCavalcanti. At the Eixo Monumental, near the bus station.

The Metropolitan Cathedral
(G. Frysinger)

The **National Theatre** on the Eixo Monumental beside the bus station is a famous Niemeyer project with three halls and an art gallery. Open 9 am-9 pm. ☎ 61-325-6107.

Adventures on Land

The **Brasília National Park** (Parque Nacional de Brasília) is the main leisure area here, about six miles/10 km out of town – locals call it **Água Mineral**. There are a few pools here for swimming, with nearby bars and restaurants, popular in the summer, and trails where you can spot wildlife and find quartz crystals on the ground. Or swim in the Rego river. To get here, take the Estrada Parque Indústria e Abastecimento (Epia) from Asa Norte.

At **Corumbá de Goiás**, 90 miles/150 km from Brasília on BR-070 at the start of the Pirineus Mountain Range, there are waterfalls and rivers to swim, and the scenic Corumbá falls with a 250-foot drop. You can also see the **Cave of Echoes**, a mile-long cavern in the town of Girassol. A visit takes about five hours. If you include transportation (and traffic), it's a full day expedition. You need a car to get there.

Adventures in the Air

You can take a panoramic helicopter flight over the city leaving from the **Torre de Televisão**. It costs about $50 for 10 minutes, operating Tuesday through Sunday from 9 am to 7 pm. It's a great way to appreciate the design of the city. ☎ 61-323-8777. Or you can just climb the tower, which has an overlook 240 feet up. Open Tuesday through Sunday 8 am-8 pm, and on Mondays during the afternoons. At the Eixo Monumental.

You can also take a sightseeing glider flight from the **Clube de Ultraleve**, at the Sector de Clube Esportivo Sul (SCES), Trecho 2, Lote15. ☎ 61-224-7035.

Adventures on the Water

There is a scenic boat cruise on the Paranoá lagoon that takes about two hours and gives you a chance to see the Alvarado Palace from the water, for under $5 (minimum of 10 people for the boat to leave – reservations are advised). The **Toa-Toa** leaves from the **Associação dos Servidores do Banco Central** (ASBAC) club (☎ 61-982-1161 or 61-414-3003) and stops at the **Dom Bosco Pyramid** on weekends from 10 am. Departures are at SCES, Avenida das Nações, lt. 1 A/B in the Asa Sul region.

Where to Stay

Accommodations are very good but expensive in Brasília, due to the heavy influx of dignitaries. The busiest time is from Tuesday through Thursday (the unofficial work week of the government). While availability is good, it pays to make advance reservations during the middle of the week, and to ask for a discount on the weekends. Service charges are 10%.

Blue Tree Park ($$$$) is the nicest hotel in town, with luxury accommodations in the Northern Hotel Sector, Trecho 1, Lote1, Bloco C at Lago Norte. ☎ 61-424-7000 or toll-free in Brazil only 0800-642-7070.

Blue Tree Park hotel

Eron Brasília Hotel ($$) is a comfortable place at the North Hotel Sector, Qd. 5, Bloco A, in front of the Torre de Televisão (where the helicopters depart). There is a golf club adjacent to the hotel. ☎ 61-329-4118 or toll free in Brazil only 0800-61-0999.

Academia de Tennis Resort ($$$) is a modern luxury hotel with saunas, pools, tennis courts fitness center and other amenities 15 minutes from the International Airport. Setor de Clubes Esportivos Sul, Trecho 4, Conjunto 5, Lote 1-B. ☎ 61-316-6161.

Naoum Plaza Hotel

Naoum Plaza Hotel ($$$) offers luxury accommodations with a Japanese restaurant on site, pool, fitness center and other amenities. Southern Hotel Sector, Qd. 0, Bloco H. ☎ 61-0322-4545.

Carlton Hotel ($$) offers comfortable lodging with fitness center, heated pool and sauna at the Southern Hotel Sector (close to the city park) at Qd. 5, Bloco G. ☎ 61-224-8819.

San Marco Hotel ($$$) has comfortable accommodations with panoramic views, sauna, indoor pool, and other amenities, close to the important points in the capital. ☎ 61-226-3055 or 61-223-6552.

Casablanca ($) offers simple but comfortable furnishings and accommodations at an affordable price, close to the Torre de Televisão. In the Northern Hotel Sector, Qd 3 Block A. ☎ 61-328-8586.

Where to Eat

A lot of politicking goes on at the restaurants but they tend to go in and out of fashion with the changes in political fortune. Here are some of the finest.

A Capitu ($$) has traditional Rio de Janeiro décor, with a café serving lighter meals such as sandwiches for a very good price. At Comércio Local Sul, Quadra 403, Bloco D, Lote 20. Open daily for lunch and dinner from Tuesday through Saturday. ☎ 61-223-0080.

Antigamente ($$) has good Brazilian-style cuisine from Minas Gerais and the Northeast in a pleasant atmosphere. At the Academia de Tennis, Setor de Clubes Esportivos Sul, Trecho 4, Conjunto 5, Lote 1B. Accepts all credit cards. Open Tuesday through Thursday 11:30 am-4 pm and on weekends 11:30 am-6 pm. ☎ 61-316-6967.

Lagash ($$$) serves Lebanese cuisine in the Asa Norte, at Comércio Local Norte, Qd. 308/309, Bloco B. Loja 11/13. Accepts all credit cards. Open daily 12 am-4 pm and 7-12 pm, 12 am-5 pm on Sunday. ☎ 61-273-0098.

La Torreta ($$$$) serves excellent Spanish cuisine – reservations are suggested. There is a special buffet on Saturday. at Comércio Local Sul, Qd. 402, Bloco A, Loja 9. Accepts American Express and Visa. Open daily 12 am-5 pm and 7-12 pm, Sunday 12 am-5 pm. ☎ 61-225-7669 or 61-321-2516.

Le Français ($$$$) serve nouvelle French cuisine and tends to get crowded. Accepts Diners, MasterCard and Visa. At Comérico Local Sul, Qd 404, Bloco B, Loja 27, it's open Tuesday through Saturday 12 am-3 pm and 7-11 pm with lunch on Sunday. ☎ 61-225-4583.

Vila Borghese ($$$) is one of the best Italian restaurants in town. At Comércio Local Sul, Qd. 201, Bloco A, Loja 33. Accepts Diners, MasterCard and Visa. Open 12 am-3 pm and 7-12 pm daily, Sunday 12 am-5 pm (closed Monday). ☎ 61-226-5650.

Trastevere ($$$) is an attractive restaurant with excellent Italian cuisine. Comércio Local Sul, Qd 115, Bloco A, Loja 2. Accepts Visa. Open 12 am-3 pm and 7:30-12 pm Monday through Saturday and for lunch on Sunday. ☎ 61-245-5513.

La Via Vecchia ($$$) at the Bonaparte Residence Hotel serves Italian and international cuisine. Setor Hoteleiro Sul, Qd. 2, Bloco 1. Accepts all credit cards. Open 12 am-3 pm and 7-12 pm on weekdays, Saturday from 7 pm-1 am. ☎ 61-321-7635 or 61-322-2288.

What to Buy

There are some street fairs in Brasília, such at the **Antiques Fair** at Setor de Habitações Individuais Sul QI 5, on the final weekend of every month 8 am-6 pm. There is also the **Television Tower Fair** at the Torre de Televisão, SDC, Eixo Monumental, on weekends and holidays 8 am-6 pm, and the **Arts Fair** at the Parque da Cidade on Sundays, at the Eixo Monumental. The airport has interesting shops as well.

Side-Trip

Emas National Park: Safaris in the Brazilian Savanna

Emu

Emas National Park (Parque das Emas) is a way to see the Brazilian savanna, which is seldom traveled but has some worthwhile sights. Only very basic services are available, but the region has good wildlife viewing opportunities. Located on a sandstone plateau at the southwest corner of **Goiás**, the region has grassy plains with woodlands, fertile river valleys, marshes, and groves of *buriti* palms. It is common to see emus, deer, wild dogs and endangered species such as the giant armadillo and, with luck, even jaguars. Bird species such as owls, ibises, quail and partridges are commonly seen.

The dry season is from May to September, with rains from October to April. In October huge termite mounds in the open fields glow at night due to the phosphorescence of the larvae. Travel here is on foot, horseback, mountain bike or Jeep.

To get here, you need to take an air taxi or travel overland through the town of **Chapadão do Céu**. From here, there is a decent road from Goiânia, taking BR-060 to Jataí then BR-364 to Mineiros. You can take buses from Goiânia or from **Cuiabá** in **Mato Grosso**, or from **São Paulo** to Mineiros. At Chapadão do Céu there is a **Visitors Center** at Avenida Ema, Qd. 5 (☎ 62-634-1228), which can orient you to lodging, dining and guides. To visit the park you must have a guide. The **Terra Nova Agency**, in Goiânia, offers full-service bilingual trips to the region for about $200 per day (less for groups of up to 20 people) with horseback riding, boat excursions, lodging and meals. Contact them via e-mail at terranova@persogo.com.br or ☎ 62-223-5891. Local guides are also available.

Two ranches have opened for tourism, the **Fazenda Santa Amelia** (☎ 62-634-1380), and **Pousada das Araras** (☎ 62-631-1431 or 62-631-6452), both with rustic lodging and meals. The park offices can be reached by phone at ☎ 62-224-2441 or 62-661-4407).

Chapada dos Veadeiros National Park

- Visit mystical locations on quartz crystal bedrock
- See unearthly, sparkling craters at the Valley of the Moon
- Hike canyons, fields and plateaus of the high Cerrado

Chapada dos Veadeiros

(M. Campos Vinhal)

Chapada dos Veadeiros is a national park on the highest plateaus of the Maranhão and Paraná river basins watershed. The park is about 155 miles/ 250 km from Brasília in the northern part of Goiás state. One of the best places in Brazil to see the high Cerrado region, the park is mostly savannah with trails through fields and forested areas, gorges and plateaus along the riverbanks, some with amazing views. Though not the best for wildlife, the Chapada dos Veadeiros does have plenty of deer, guara-wolves, and king vultures, which are endangered, plus more common creatures such as anteaters and wild dogs. The closest city is **Alto Paraíso**, a magnet for all kinds of "New Age" spiritualists, psychics, seers, UFO watchers and witch-doctors, due to the huge quartz crystal bedrock formations and the writings of a 19th-century mystic named Dom Bosco. Dom Bosco predicted that a great utopian civilization would spring up from the 15th Parallel, and the town has accordingly been called the "capital of the third millenium."

Access to the park grounds is actually from the tiny village of **São Jorge** nearby. There are two seasons here: rainy and dry, which are important for planning your trip. During the rainy season from November to March, the rivers fill and waterfalls form, giving life to the savanna and bringing the flowers to bloom. You will notice that the rivers here tend to be clear and dark, tinged by the heavy concentration of iron oxide, with the main river being the Rio Preto. The rest of the year it's dry, and the grasses turn golden brown. In the Brazilian winter months, from July to August, the air temperature drops and blasts of cold air sweep the landscape, which is dotted with termite mounds. Chapada dos Veadeiros is known more for its scenery than rugged adventures. There are, however, very good opportunities for adventure sports such as canyoning, rappelling, horseback riding, mountain biking and hiking.

How to Get Here & Getting Around

To get to the park, take a car or bus from Brasília (along Federal Highway BR 020), passing through the town of Planaltina. Then take State Highway GO-118, through the towns of São Gabriel and São João da Aliança, until you get to Alto Paraíso. From there, it is about 18 miles/30 km on a dirt road, which is in very poor condition, to the park entrance at São Jorge.

The **Real Expresso** busline (☎ 0800-617-325) goes to the park as well, leaving at 10 am and 10 pm, as does the **Santo Antonio** bus line (☎ 61-223-0507), leaving at 3 pm. Some local travel agencies offer overland transport in cars from Brasília at about $75 for a group.

São Jorge is a simple town with a mix of old crystal miners turned tour guides, rustic locals, artists and New Age types who came because of the crystals. You can go on foot from there to many of the attractions, though some require hikes of several miles.

To get to São Jorge, there is only one bus per day from Alto Paraíso, but the travel agencies offer transport options – ask at the Tourist Information Center in Alto Paraíso. For money changing and international cash withdrawals from ATMs, you should handle this in Brasília as there are only limited facilities in town.

Once in the park, travel is mainly on foot over mining trails that were built during the Gold Rush.

Flora & Fauna

There are tens of thousands of species here, including large mammals such as the giant anteater, deer, or the more common tapirs, capybaras, and several species of armadillo. You will probably see many birds such as toucans, owls, emus. As might be expected in the hot grasslands, there are plenty of reptiles including rattlesnakes, anacondas, as well as the insects and rodents they feed upon.

The flora are also extremely diverse, with immense flowering purple and yellow *ipês*, one of the most typical Brazilian trees, along with cashew trees, bromeliads, and orchids. Others that are imported are no less beautiful, such as flamboyants and palms adapted to the acidic and often hardscrabble topsoil. Many of the plants here are being studied for their medicinal properties, long known to the indigenous populations, and many find their way into herbal remedies sold all over the country.

There are plenty of fruits here as well, including the exotic *buriti* palm fruit, made locally into sweets or liquor, a special kind of Cerrado pear, and the red *pitanga*.

Yellow ipês
(J. Fonseca)

For More Information

There is a great website with information in English and photos at **www.chapada.com**. In Alto Paraíso there is a **Tourist Information Center** on the main road through town, Avendia Ary Ribeiro Valadão Filho, 1100 (☎ 62-446-1159, cataltopariso@aol.com. Stop here to pick up maps and other information.

Planning Your Trip

☞ The park is closed every Monday for maintenance.

Most people spend at least two days and up to five to see everything at a leisurely pace. There is a lot of walking along trails. Some are a few miles long but none more than moderately strenuous. Many of the main attractions can be reached with a short walk if you have a car, or a long one if you don't. You will definitely need adequate footwear.

Though not heavily frequented by international travelers (making it hard to find English speakers at times), the region has very good facilities. There are very limited supplies available in São Jorge, so bring personal supplies, such as film and medicines, or buy them at Alto Paraíso. Bring bottled water and a snack, as there are no restaurants in the park. Insect repellent is useful, as are mosquito coils at night. In a few locations bees and hornets can be a nuisance.

☞ While very rare, yellow fever supposedly exists here, and vaccinations are advised.

The region is equatorial and sunny, so you should bring sun block, a brimmed hat, and sunglasses during the summer months. Smoking is strongly discouraged in the park due to the risk of wildfires in the dry season. It is a good idea to call ahead to the park offices during the rainy season to see if the park is open (☎ 62-446-1570). If you do go during the rainy season, bring rain gear with you.

The best time to visit is when the flowers are in bloom, from about April to May, and there is less rainfall then to interfere with hiking. At this time, too, the waterfalls are full, which are one of the main attractions.

Local Guides & Travel Agencies

It is mandatory that you have a guide to enter the park, but their services are optional outside the park grounds. As a rule, the majority of attractions do require a guide, who can make things easier for you and can keep you from getting lost. Guides will cost around $15, plus nominal entrance fees. Check with the **Association of Visitors' Guides** (☎ 61-646-1570) or the **Association of Ecological Tourism Services** (☎ 61-646-1235) for available guides. You can also get in touch directly with **Travessia Ecoturismo** (☎ 62-646-1595), **Transchapada Turismo** (☎ 62-646-1345 or 62-9961-8444), or **Alpatur** (☎ 62-646-1820 or 62-646-1821), which are high quality guide services.

Adventures in the Park

In the park itself there are two main destinations: the **Rio Preto Falls** and the **Canyons**, each requiring about a day. Outside the park there are many more options. Virtually all the adventures require walking or hiking, and some can be lengthy, though few are very rigorous. Many also offer swimming in natural pools and waterfalls.

Rappelling

Raizama

The **Cachoeira da Água Fria** is a 620-foot waterfall with three separate cascades and a view of the Moinho Valley. It is about five miles north of Alto Paraíso at the Santa Rita de Cássia Campgrounds, outside the park. Access is along GO-118, requiring a hike of almost four miles. It is on private property, so you can expect to pay about $20 per person to rappel here. You must be accompanied by instructors and guided visits are almost always in groups. The different falls are good for both beginners and more experienced adventurers. The area called **Raizama** is another popular location for rappelling. It's a waterfall about three miles from São Jorge on GO-327 at the Rio São Miguel. There is a one-mile hike to the falls, but it is closed during the rainy season.

Scenic Overlooks

There are some beautiful lookout points in the park. The **Mirante do Baliza** offers 360° visibility at an altitude of 5,000 feet/1,560 m. It is a bit far from the other attractions, near Alto Paraíso. Follow the signs on GO-118 toward Brasília along a bad road for about three miles/five km. The **Morada do Sol** is surrounded by ledges of rock that form waterfalls from the runoff, perfect for taking a dip in the swirling, refreshing water. Access is easy, about four miles/6.6 km from the district of São Jorge along the Rio São Miguel, on a one-mile trail. A guide is required for these locations.

★★★Valley of the Moon

The number-one destination in the region is the **Valley of the Moon** (Vale da Lua), outside the park. Here the Rio São Miguel runs through formations of gray rock sculpted by erosion and glittering with quartz crystals in an intriguing "lunar" landscape worthy of its name, especially on a moonlit night. Take a dip in the natural pools. There is a non-strenuous 20-minute walk to this spot, and you should count on spending about a half-day. You don't need a guide here. The entrance is about three miles/five km before the São Jorge district following the signs on Highway GO-327. You can buy snacks and drinks nearby. Entrance costs about a dollar.

★★Waterfalls in the Park

The park has some famous waterfalls such as the **Rio Preto Falls One** and **Two** (called *saltos*), with a 400-ft/125-m and a 260-ft/81-m drop respectively down sheer rock cliffs. The falls are surrounded by greenery and their waters are dark from the iron oxide. Rio Preto Two has a torturous descent along a trail, and swimming is prohibited. Nearby is the area called **Pedreiras**, an abandoned quartz quarry with natural pools. The entire trail is 7½ miles/12 km and fairly strenuous. This is a full-day adventure and is recommended.

Canyons One and **Two** along the Rio Preto, also inside the park, provide stunning views of the local terrain and wildlife but you can only go during the dry season. There is a waterfall here called **Cariocas**, one of the most famous in the region with a trail to Canyon Two. The walk is long, a little over six miles/10 km, but not so strenuous. You have a choice of walking over the rocks along the river, which is more difficult or taking an easier hike through the Cerrado. The falls at the Canyons are one of the main attractions in the region.

★Waterfalls at Rio de Couros

Outside the park, there are two good falls called **Cachoeiras Almécegas**, at the **Hotel Fazenda São Bento**, 4.8 miles/eight km from Alto Paraíso on GO-239 at the Rio de Couros (watch for the signs). Almécegas One is a free-falling 150-ft/47-m drop and clear green waters along the stream of the same name. You can visit the falls either by taking a trail up above, or by seeing it from below. The hike is moderately strenuous, but this is one of the nicest falls with beautiful views along the way. Almécegas Two is closer to the road, and smaller.

Cachoeiras Almécegas

Closer to the highway is **Cachoeira São Bento**, with easy access from the parking area. There is a natural pool with a grotto along the Rio do Couros. You can get within a half-mile of each by car and a guide is not necessary. Entrance to the farm is marked and costs a couple of dollars, but go early as the area closes at 5 pm.

Waterfalls at Rio do Macaco

Cachoeira do Macaco on the Rio Macaco has a series of falls near the Rainbow Village (Aldeia Arco-Íris) community with lodging and dining for visitors. The complex is difficult to reach – local outfitters can help you get there. You have to take a dirt road (4WD vehicle is advised), along a steep and rocky trail. The entrance to the dirt road is located about 24 miles/40 km from Alto Paraíso on GO-118 toward Brasília. While harder to get to, this is a scenic locale.

Waterfalls at Rio Cristal

The **Rio Cristal Falls** is a secondary destination 4.8 miles/eight km north of Alto Paraíso with easy access along Highway GO-118 in the direction of Teresina de Goiás. There are a number of pleasant falls here with places for sunbathing or to take a dip in natural pools. The hike is easy. Entrance costs about a dollar.

Moinho Village

Near the Moinho Village, there is a large, fertile valley between two mountain ranges, the Serra Geral do Paranã and Serra da Água Fria. The park here is called **Parque Solarion**, with steep hikes to the **Arcanjo** and **Anjo** waterfalls on the Rio Pretinho, as well as to the **Sítio Flor** gold mining camp. All this is private property, and entrance costs a few dollars. These are more rigorous hikes than others in the region. A trip here takes a half-day, and a guide is required. To get here from Alto de Paraíso, you take the Estrada de Moinho seven miles/12 km from Alto Paraíso

★Whale Hill

Whale Hill (Morro da Baleia) is a New Age landmark with ceremonies, UFO vigils, and meditation on top of the distinctive mountain. During parts of the rainy season, you can take a dip in the pools that form on the first plateau. The hike takes about a day and is a good option for a long walk through the region. The entrance to the trail is 11 miles/ 18 km from Alto Paraíso on GO-239 (about halfway between Alto Paraíso and São Jorge).

About a mile away down the highway is the entrance to **Jardim de Maytrea**, where there is a nature walk through the fields of the Cerrado and to the rounded hills called "the woman's breasts." Also nearby is the **Morro do Buracão**, a steep hill with a rewarding view and quartzite formations. These are secondary destinations but worthwhile if you have already seen the main attractions. A guide is required.

Where to Stay

You have two options for lodging near the park, either Alto Paraíso, which has more stores and services, or São Jorge, which is closer to the park entrance. São Jorge is rustic and more charming but offers no great advantage for getting to scenic areas outside the park. Reservations are a good idea around the major holidays, especially at New Years Eve.

Camping is also available outside the park; check with the local Tourist Information Center for suggestions.

Alto Paraíso de Goiás

Hotel Europa ($) is the nicest of several hotels in town. at Rua 1, Quadra 7, close to the bus station. ☎ 62-646-1558.

Pousada Alfa e Ômega ($) is a nice inn on Rua Joaquim de Almeida, 15, with air-conditioning, television, sauna and pool. Alternative therapies are available. ☎ 62-646-1225.

Pousada do Mirante ($) is an affordable place at Rua 3, Quadra 4, Lot 13-15 (in the Estância Paraíso area) with 10 air-conditioned rooms. ☎ 62-646-1494.

Pousada Fazenda São Bento ($$) is a ranch where you can stay for a night (or more, if you want) in rooms or chalets. It's close to the **Rio dos Couros** waterfalls, six miles/10 km from Alto Paraíso on State Highway GO-239. Horseback riding is available to guests. ☎ 62-646-1268 or 62-9978-8265.

Pousada Renascer na Luz ($) is an inn at Rua Joaquim Costa, 234, with air-conditioned rooms. Esoteric therapies are available. ☎ 62-646-1427.

Pousada Renascer na Luz

São Jorge

Pousada Aldeia da Lua ($$) has 13 chalets with nearby waterfalls and sauna in a beautiful locale. Make reservations through **Alpatur** travel agency or call ☎ 61-9978-0686 or 61-646-1820.

Pousada Águas do Março ($) is a rustic inn with air-conditioning and a sauna at Rua 12, Quadra 14, Lot 3-5. ☎ 61-347-2082.

Pousada Mundo da Lua ($) is a comfortable inn with air-conditioned rooms at Rua 12, Quadra 10, Lot 10. ☎ 61-9983-8577.

Pousada Casa das Flores ($$) offers romantic candle-lit rooms and everything for a lovers' getaway. Rua 10, Quadra 2, Lot 14. ☎ 61-234-7493.

Pousada Trilha Violeta ($) is a pleasant, affordable guesthouse close to the main road in town on Rua 12, Quadra 7, Lot 5. ☎ 61-9985-6544.

Where to Eat

Goiás has some interesting local cuisine. Try *matula*, which is similar to *feijoada*, with white beans mashed with manioc flour and colored with *urucum*, a local reddish seed similar to tumeric. It is then mixed with dried beef and sausages, and served in banana leaves. *Arroz de pequi* is a rice dish with *pequi* fruit, found only in the Cerrado.

In Alto Paraíso

Restaurante Jambalaya ($$), run by Renato and Nives, is one of the best in town, with a lunch buffet. It is at Estância Paraíso (in front of the Mirante inn), Avenida Ari Valadão. Open for lunch and dinner (closed on Monday and Wednesday from February to June and August to November). ☎ 62-9973-5501.

For meats, try **Churrascaria Espeto do Sul** ($$), run by Andreia and João Carlos, on State Highway GO 118 (at the 116 Km mark. ☎ 62-646-1729.

In São Jorge

Papalua Delicias ($), run by Jaqueline and Renato, serves Italian cuisine at Rua 12, Qd. 7, Lt. 8, open from 4-12 pm and on weekends from 2 pm to midnight (closed Wednesday and Thursday). ☎ 61-9958-7119.

The Amazon

For many travelers, exploring the Amazon is the dream of a lifetime. Within this wet, breathing biomass is one-fifth of the world's fresh ground water. There are close to four million square miles of rainforest in the Amazon, much larger than many countries of the world. On the Brazilian side alone, three-fifths of the country's landmass is in the Amazon, including the Amazon River, the longest in the world. The region is incredibly important to Brazilian history and culture. For this reason, when people think of the Amazon they typically think of Brazil.

IN THIS CHAPTER

- **The Western Amazon**

Manaus, Rio Negro, Rio Solimões 424

- **Eastern Amazônia**

Pará 471

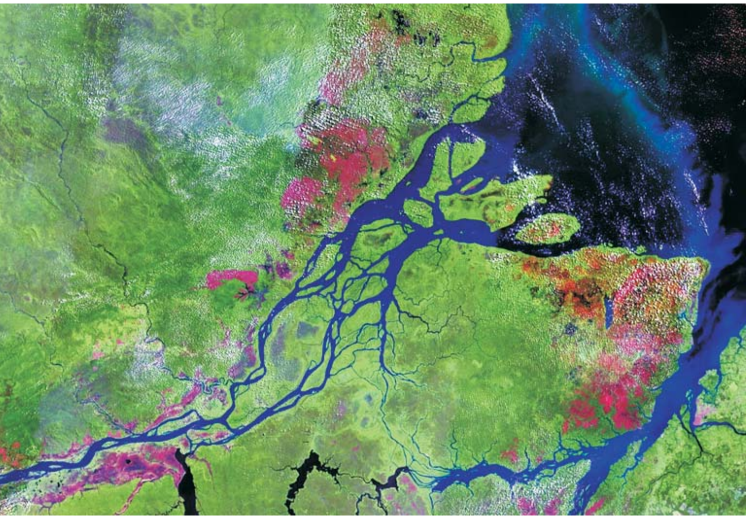
Sometimes called by the generic term "Amazônia," the region got its name from the Spanish friar Gaspar de Cavajal, who chronicled the voyage up the great river of explorer Francisco de Orellana in the early 16th century. The friar wrote that women warriors attacked their ship, supposedly to capture them for procreation before killing them – like the mythical Amazons of ancient Greece.

The reality is that Amazônia is one of the least populous regions in the world. Like Brazil itself, it is a region of contrasts, with limited infrastructure, but with some of the world's richest resources of produce, timber and minerals. Outside the cities, visitors rapidly come in contact with the traditional subsistence lifestyle of the *caboclos*, as the river dwellers are known. Farther into the forest, the indigenous communities largely maintain their Pre-Colombian ways of life.

The wildlife and the ever-changing landscape and riverways make each visit unique. So quickly do the river passages change their course that it is sometimes not possible to return from the jungle along the same route you took going in.

Today there are an incredible range of options for visiting this amazing region, from comfortable lodges on stilts over the water to journeys on river boats or rugged expeditions into the deep jungle. This section will take you there.

How This Section Works



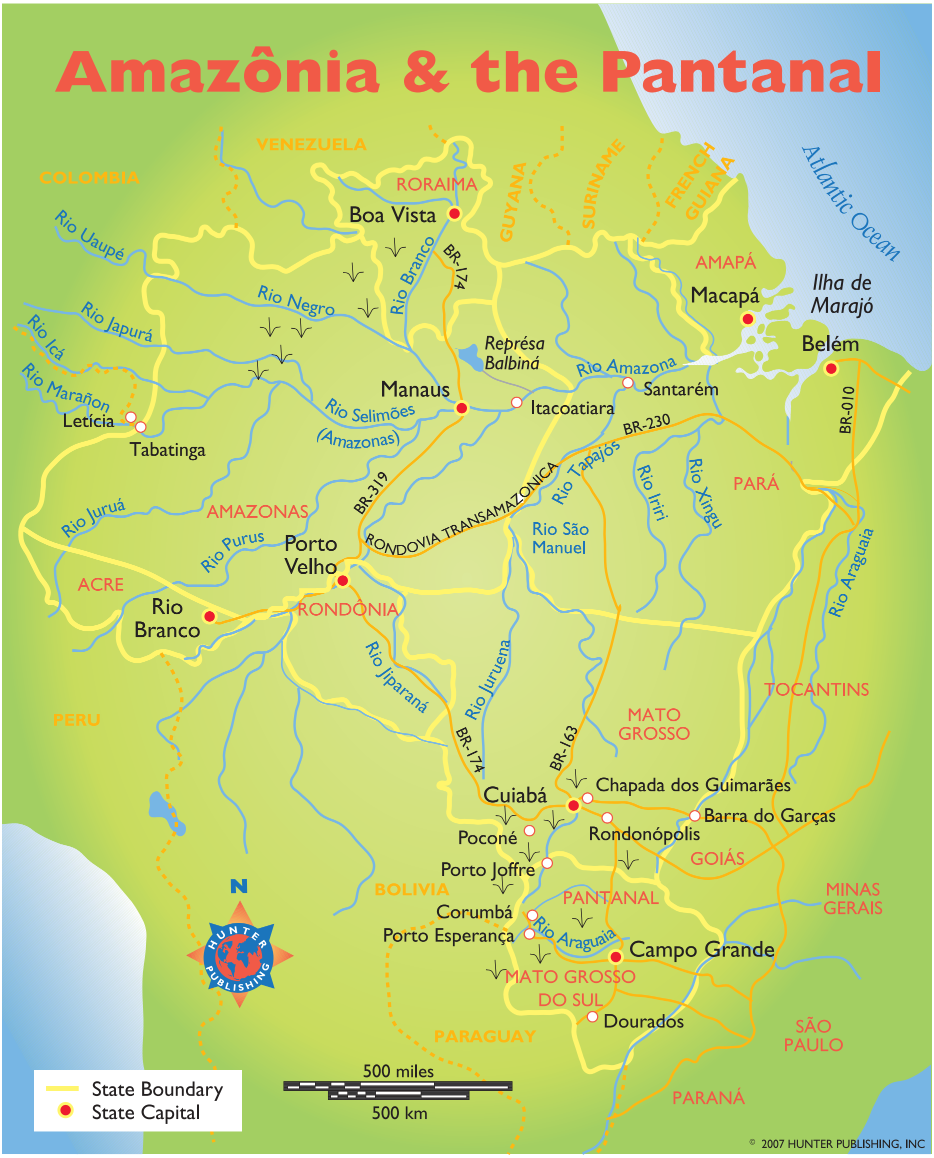
The mouths of the Amazon, seen from space

This book divides the immense Amazonian region into western and eastern sections, as each has its own unique characteristics. The **Western Amazon** is the state of **Amazonas** on the border with Peru, Colombia, and Venezuela. In this region of the Amazon nearly 98% of the rainforest is unspoiled. It is here where the pristine headwaters of the Amazon – the Rio Negro and the Rio Solimoes – come down from the Andes, far from the modern world. The main port of entry for exploring this region is the jungle metropolis called **Manaus**.

On the **eastern side** of the Amazon, there are some amazingly beautiful destinations, but there are fewer options as the region has been partially deforested and basic transportation and infrastructure are problematic. The top destination on the eastern side is **Pará** state, with its rich cultural life, the exotic capital **Belém**, nearby **Ilha de Marajó**, and **Santarém**, up the Amazon River near the border with Amazonas.

Amazonian states such as Acre, Rondonia, Roraima, Tocantins and Amapá can be visited but are not recommended here due to the difficult access, poor infrastructure, deforestation, travel risks, and comparatively low-quality travel experience.

Each region is detailed below according to the type of trip you want to take. There are explanations of what preparations to make and how to make the most of your trip while in Brazil. The best outfitters have been carefully screened to provide the highest quality services, and there is a wide range of options for all budgets.


Amazônia & the Pantanal
VENEZUELA
COLOMBIA
RORAIMA
Boa Vista
GUYANA
SURINAME
FRENCH GUIANA
Atlantic Ocean
AMAPÁ
Macapá
Ilha de Marajó
Belém
Rio Uaupé
Rio Negro
Rio Branco
BR-174
Rio Japurá
Rio Içá
Rio Marañon
Letícia
Tabatinga
Represa Balbiná
Manaus
Itacoatiara
Rio Amazona
Santarém
Rio Selimões (Amazonas)
BR-230
BR-010
BR-319
Rio Tapajós
Rio Iriri
Rio Xingu
PARÁ
Rio Juruá
AMAZONAS
Rio Purus
Porto Velho
RONDOVIA TRANSAMAZONICA
Rio São Manuel
ACRE
Rio Branco
RONDÔNIA
Rio Araguaia
Rio Jiparaná
Rio Juruena
TOCANTINS
PERU
MATO GROSSO
BR-174
BR-163
Cuiabá
Chapada dos Guimarães
Barra do Garças
Poconé
Rondonópolis
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500 km
PARANÁ
State Boundary
State Capital
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The Rainforest

The rainforest is a constantly changing entity filled with life. Due to the proximity to the equator, there is very little fluctuation throughout the year in temperature or amount of sunlight each day. In the Amazon, the changes of the seasons are marked by the difference in rainfall. The

Amazon landscape *(João Ramid)*

average temperature is 79°F/26°C, with close to 100% relative humidity all the time.

The entire landscape undergoes a complete transformation every six months due to the arrival of the rainy season. The rainfall in the Amazon basin total nine feet every year. The plants and animals in the forest consume just under half of all this water and the rest forms rivers or evaporates, seen as columns of mist rising out of the jungle. In some regions, you may see haunting will-o-wisps or blasts of burning methane, which is caused by decaying vegetation and believed by the indigenous people to be a forest spirit.

The Amazonian rainforest *(João Ramid)*

The water consumed by the trees and plants is transformed into oxygen – on average about 96 tons per year. Contrary to common belief, this oxygen represents only an infinitesimal contribution to the entire earth's atmosphere. The Amazon is called the "lungs" of the world because its vegetation traps significant quantities of carbon dioxide, thus "filtering" the unbreathable gasses out of the atmosphere.

There are thousands upon thousands of species of trees here, including multiple varieties of each, far more than in North America. There are thought to exist up to 100 different species of plants and animals per acre, compared to a maximum of nine species per acre in North America according to some studies.

It may be hard to imagine that the current forest is only a fraction of its original size, but some researchers suggest that the current size could only one fifth of the original rainforest. This is due primarily to human occupation.

Rainforest deforestation is a problem because the soil of the Amazon is sandy and devoid of nutrients – it is the decaying vegetation from trees that enables new plant life to take root. When the trees are cut down, the forest turns to desert. At one point in the 1980s, in Rondônia state to the north of the equator, it was shown that the equivalent of one football field was disappearing every five seconds because of the illegal timber industry and mining!

Ever-Changing Environments

Three main evironments exist in Amazonia due to changes in the rainfall throughout the year. The fluctuation of water levels is most extreme in the Western Amazon. Because the river levels are constantly changing, many kinds of houses, trading posts, warehouses, fuel stations, and even cattle corrals or household gardens, are built on floating structures tied to the riverbank. Entire trees are submerged during the rainy season, and you may see them only as treetops poking through the water.

Among the Amazon environments are the *várzeas*, or sandy areas that appear as sandbars or beaches during the dry season when the water drains away. These are the best places to see local wildlife (especially mammals) because it is here that they come down out of the forest to drink.

Everywhere in the forest and among these landforms are permanent lakes, perpetually refreshed by fresh water during the rainy season. These lakes are called *igapós*, where the permanent flooding has caused the plant life to adapt its roots to the water.

Finally there are the highlands, where most of the land-dwelling wildlife exists. There are some legendary creatures here such as anacondas, which can grow 100 feet long, or the largest spider in the world with a leg-span of nearly one foot.

In and among these ever-changing landscapes, are the *igarapés*, or waterways. The word igarapé comes from the Hengatu dialect of the Tupi indigenous language, spoken pretty much everywhere in the Western Amazon. It means "canoe road" and this is exactly what they are – narrow branches of the rivers that flow between the flooded treetops and dwindle to shallow creeks during the dry season.

The rivers differ greatly from one another and there are three basic types. **Dark rivers** (like the Rio Negro in the Western Amazon) are clear and extremely acidic due to tannins from the decaying vegetaion. As a result, they have fewer fish and mosquitoes. **Blue rivers** (like the Rio Tapajós in the Eastern Amazon) are also clear but lack the mineral sediment and tannins. **White or yellow rivers** carry a lot of mud and debris (like the Rio Solimões in the Western Amazon).

The largest is the Amazon River (Rio Amazonas), which is up to 6.2 miles/10 km wide in some places and as much as 300 feet deep. The river pours more fresh water into the Atlantic Ocean in a single day than the Thames River all year long – up to 32 million gallons per second, one fifth of the total that flows into the world's oceans.

The river carries an average of three million tons per day of sediment all the way from the Andes Mountains in central South America. Satellite photos have shown that the northern coast of South America is expanding due to these sedimentary deposits.

Wildlife

Piranha *(R.Wampers)*

The diversity and number of species in Amazônia is staggering, estimated to be as much as a third of the world's total. Some estimate that there are 60,000 species of plants, 3,000 species of fish, 300 species of mammals, and 2½ million species of invertebrates!

For travelers, wildlife sighting is usually via small boats through the *igarapés.* Normally, this is part of the package at the jungle lodges. Most people get to hold an alligator on these trips. Underwater, alligators keep their mouths shut to avoid drowning and can't bite anyone. So, at night, after spotting their glowing eyes with a lantern, your guide will grab one out of the water and pass it around, so you can take a photo.

At some spots, such as the **Anavilhanas Archipelago** in the Western Amazon, there are places to feed and swim with river dolphins called *botos*, which is an extraordinary adventure. In others, depending on the season, you might see turtle nests or monkeys and, if you are lucky, the most impressive Amazon creature of all – the jaguar.

You will usually get a chance to fish for piranhas too if you travel outside the cities. Don't worry – these fish have a vicious reputation but are not as dangerous as people think unless there are huge schools of them. Piranha fishing is a novelty. For serious anglers, ecologically sustainable catch-and-release sport fishing is available the Western Amazon.

One great way see the local wildlife is to visit the parks, zoos, and museums in Manaus and Belém. Differ-

Pirarara *(Monika Betley)*

ent than zoos in the rest of Brazil, the exhibits here are pretty good.

Pygmy marmoset (Wilfried Berns)

Amazon mammals alone account for more than two thirds of the total mammal species in Brazil, including over 100 different kinds of bats. Besides the dolphins and other kinds of fish in the rivers, even saltwater sharks have reportedly been captured as far upriver as Peru. Some of the fish are amazing, such as the *piraracú*. It grows six feet long and has scales the size of potato chips. Indigenous girls use them as nail files. There is a spiny catfish called the "lobster of the Amazon," as well as the *pirarara*, the most colorful catfish in the world. The *jacaré-açu* alligator can grow to 20 feet, and there are bizarre creatures such as the armored *tamuatá* fish, or the prehistoric turtle, called a *matamatá*, that emits a horrible stench.

Lilac-crowned Amazon parrot (CDest)

Up above in the canopies are sloths and nocturnal monkeys with huge eyes, among other primates, many very rare. Some, called "pot-bellied" monkeys, live more or less like people in certain indigenous tribes, and one, the pygmy marmoset, is the size of your thumb.

In addition to hundreds of snakes and lizards, the largest beetle in the world lives here, which is larger than a human hand, as do amazingly big butterflies.

Birdwatchers love the Amazon because there are rare birds such as the harpy eagle, macaw, toucan, and many others. There are frogs that can weigh over two pounds and lily pads that grow over six feet in diameter. A plant was even discovered that has a leaf over eight feet long and three feet wide.

The forest is also home to numerous kinds of edible and medicinal plants and oilseeds, many not fully researched, but commonly consumed in Brazil as herbal medicines, such as *guaraná*, an energetic berry believed to maintain youth and sexual vigor.

Despite constant research into the Amazon, there are new species of plants and animals discovered all the time, even in comparatively well traveled regions close to Manaus. This rich assortment of wildlife has sparked a massive illegal market where plants, snakes, birds, spiders, amphibians and fish are sold overseas for medical purposes or to collectors. Most of the pirated wildlife dies en route after being drugged to remain quiet then stuffed into airless containers.

Brazil is aggressively trying to halt this problem so be careful with any purchase you make. Exporting live animals without authorization is also a crime that could land you in serious trouble. The same applies to indigenous or *caboclo* handicrafts; you could be detained at the airport for trying to export illegal products.

One way to be sure what you are buying is legal and ethical is to shop the stores that are listed in this section. Legitimate indigenous goods should be certified. The same applies to goods made with feathers, bones or other animal products, and there is a growing trend toward using deadwood or other ecologically sound materials in products sold to tourists. By purchasing only legitimate goods you are helping to support the local communities without spoiling the Amazon.

Tips for Enjoying the Amazon

Manaus dock *(Galen Frysinger)*

The waterways are the highways of the jungle, and to see the forest up close you will have to take a boat at some point. There are many ways to go about this, from exotic trips on big river boats where you lie back in a hammock as the jungle drifts by, to small and quiet canoes that take you up flooded riverways ringing with birdsong.

Among the most fascinating phenomena are the river junctions, where two separate flows run side-by-side for great distances without mixing, creating a remarkable two-tone effect. It can be seen near Manaus and Santarém. This is what inspired the famous black-and-white paving stones along the boardwalks in Rio and elsewhere in Brazil).

The region also has some of the best sport fishing expeditions anywhere in the world – there are tips below for anglers and detailed information about the best outfitters.

Most people use the cities or nearby jungle lodges as a base for their exploration and this is an excellent way to make the most of your trip. In the cities themselves there is a lot to see and do, but the real adventure begins in the rainforest. Seeing the jungle does not require roughing it. Many of the outfitters today provide comfortable and well run expedi-

tions that can be enjoyed by people of all ages. If you do seek some hard adventures, though, you will not be disappointed.

You may want to take on Pico de Neblina, Brazil's highest peak, which involves a combination of mountain climbing, river exploration and a wild and woolly border town far from civilization. Or get in touch with one of the deep jungle experts and plan your own unique adventure.

Indian boy from Pará

To experience the culture, you can take part in the remarkable Boi-Bumbás festival, or visit traditional communities and even indigenous villages. There are said to be as many as 50 different indigenous tribes who have never had any contact with the outside world. Some of these groups are believed to make their home in the Western Amazon near the borderlands of São Gabriel de Cachoeira, covered in this chapter.

Regardless of which you choose, a trip to the Amazon is one of the most exhilarating travel experiences anywhere in the world.

Natural Wonders

- Alter do Chão (Pará)
- Amazon River (Amazonas & Pará)

Amazon "Beach" Resorts

- Santarém (Pará)
- Marajó (Pará)
- Manaus (Amazonas)

Wildlife Observation

- Rio Solimões (Amazonas)

- Rio Negro (Amazonas)
- Rio Tapajós (Pará)

Amazon Culture

- Parantins (Amazonas)
- Maués (Amazonas)
- Rio Tapajós (Pará)
- Rio Negro (Amazonas)

Rugged Adventures

- Pico de Neblina (Amazonas)
- Amazon National Park (Pará)
- Mamori e Juma (Amazonas)

Dining & Nightlife

- Manaus (Amazonas)
- Belém (Pará)

The Western Amazon: Manaus, Rio Negro & Rio Solimões

Manaus

- A rainforest metropolis built during the rubber boom
- See the junction of the Rio Negro and Rio Solimões
- Journey to exotic indigenous and river communities

Manaus Opera House *(Pontanegra)*

Manaus, the capital of Amazonas state, is an unusual city. Nestled in the richest plant and animal habitat in the world, this humid metropolis of over a million and a half inhabitants is a mix of wealth and chaos. The city sprang up from an isolated port town during the rubber boom from 1890 to 1912, fast becomming one of the wealthiest cities in the Americas. Financed by European investors, Brazil's monopoly on the rubber plant transformed Manaus into an enclave of European aristocracy where French was spoken as much as Portuguese and the local currency was backed by the British pound sterling. Today the European influence is unmistakable. The elaborate mansions, palaces and monuments, such as the **Manaus Opera House**, were the result of an ambitious governor who was quite possibly insane. His name was **Eduardo Ribeiro** and, before killing himself in 1900, this eccentric statesman managed to carry out his vision of transforming this remote outpost into the envy of the world. He did it by taxing the wealth of the rubber barons and building such extravagant structures that the city was second only to Rio de Janeiro in glory at the time.

The rubber boom collapsed when a British agent finally spirited away a boatload of rubber saplings and planted them in Asia, eventually making the British Empire the world's largest rubber producer and sending Manaus into decline. The city only began to prosper again with government support in recent decades to prop up the local economy.

Visiting here can be a fascinating experience. The crowded streets are alive with commerce and food stalls that sell fried bananas, bowls of dark purple *açaí* fruit pulp mixed with manioc, or the energetic *guaraná*, mixed with honey, lime and any number of other concoctions. Don't miss the **Municipal Market** with its barrage of sights and sounds – the rows of spices, fish, baskets and baubles are like a walk through time. There are some worthwhile parks, museums and nature sanctuaries in town as well. Breakfast is served with tropical fruits and juices, and at any meal there are flavors like the fermented manioc juice called *tacacá*, found nowhere else but here.

This sprawling city with its blend of the sumptuous and ramshackle is a kind of urban alter ego for the untameable jungle. The jungle beyond may have been hacked back and burned down but it lurks there blinking and breathing, seeming to study the city for its chance to retake the glorious palaces and monuments one-by-one.

How to Get Here

The easiest way to get to Manaus is by plane, either directly or through a connecting flight on a domestic carrier. The **international airport** (☎ 92-652-1012) is on Avenida Santos Dumont 1350, about 30 minutes from downtown.

Another option is to take a regional boat from Belém in the Eastern Amazon. The trip takes five days (and three days to get back) – see the box in Belém for details.

There is also a paved road from Boa Vista in Roraima and Venezuela called Highway BR-714. Bus lines travel the route. You can drive it but not easily, as parts of the road are off-limits at night due to hostile indigenous groups. The Transamazônica Highway, built as a transcontinental land-route through the jungle, has by all but disappeared.

For getting to suggested destinations from Manaus you should either take a boat (see below) or a regional flight, depending on the distance: **Rico Linhas Aéreas** (www.voerico.com.br, ☎ 92-652-1164); **Transportes Aéreos Regionais** (www.tavaj.com.br, ☎ 92-652-1642); **Meta** (☎ 92-232-9353); **Penta Transportes Aéreos** (☎ 92-652-1161);

Total Linhas Aéreas (☎ 92-652-1499). For regional, national and international flights, **Varig** is at Rua Marcilio Dias, 284, in the Centro near the Praça de Polícia. ☎ 92-622-3161.

Getting Around

Getting around can be a bit of a challenge in the Western Amazon. Outside the airport is a stand with three radio **taxi** cooperatives. They charge about $15, twice what the meter would show for the 20-minute trip to the Centro, but the regular cabs that work the airport charge the same price. The taxi co-ops also work in town: **Coopertaxi** (☎ 92-652-1568), **Radiotaxi** (☎ 92-652-1578), and **Vitortaxi** (☎ 92-636-6721).

In town, common taxis work at stands or circulate freely, but are more expensive than in other Brazilian cities. The meter should read "1" during weekdays till 11 pm and "2" (about 30% more expensive) on weekends, holidays, and all of November.

You can take a **bus** to the Centro from outside the airport. The buses are to the right, numbers 306 or 126 (which stops in Ponta Negra), costing less than a dollar. They leave from 5 am to 11:30 pm, every 15 minutes, and every half-hour on weekends.

Buses are efficient but run only until about 11:30 pm, and you can get advice on what bus to take from Amazonastur at Praça Matriz near the cathedral is a terminal.

Rental cars are available at **Avis** in the airport (☎ 92-652-1579), and downtown (☎ 92-234-4440), or at **Localiza** in the airport (☎ 92-652-1176) or downtown (☎ 92-233-4141).

Credit cards are accepted in many places but Visa appears to be preferred. For currency exchange, at the airport you can try the **Banco do Brasil** or **Bradesco**, or the **União Alternativa** exchange bureau. There are quite a few ATMs in the Centro such as HSBC on Rua Dr. Moreira, 226 (☎ 92-622-3454) and at the **Hotel Tropical** in Ponta Negra that handle Cirrus, Plus and credit cards. Hotels sell currency at a lousy rate if you are in a pinch. **Cortez Câmbio e Turismo** at Avenida 7 de Setembro, 1199, in the Centro, also does currency exchange (☎ 92-622-4222).

Manaus is the main point of departure to the other destinations in the Western Amazon. The rainy season is from December to May, with milder temperatures and downpours, while the dry season is from June to November, with intense sun and high temperatures. It is easier to travel in the rainy season as more waterways are navegable.

The main point of reference in town is the **Rio Negro**, which joins with the **Rio Solimões** not far from Manaus to become the mighty Amazon. The best neighborhoods to visit are in the upscale Western Zone (near Ponta Negra) and the Southern Zone (near the historic Centro), where the port, cathedral and Opera House are located.

For More Information

The **Amazonastur** tourist office can provide info on travel in the region – check their website www.amazonastur.am.gov.br or call ☎ 92-652-1120, 92-233-1928, or 0800-280-8820 toll free inside Brazil. They have information booths at the airport, on Avenida Eduardo Ribeiro on the corner with José Clemente, or at the river port. Amazonastur is useful to check guides' credentials and they publish a free monthly booklet (in Portuguese only) called *Bussola Manaus*, with all kinds of services and nightlife options.

You should not hire a guide for a deep jungle trip unless you have first verified their standing with Amazonastur.

The municipal tour board, **Manaustur**, is at Avenida 7 de Setembro, 157. Reach them at www.manaustur.com.br or by calling ☎ 92-622-4948, 92-233-1517 or 92-234-4261.

There is public Internet access Monday through Saturday from 8 am-10 pm at **Cybercity** in the Centro, on the corner of Getulio Vargas and 7 de Setembro, for about $1 per hour (☎ 92-234-8930).

The **Indigenous Affairs Department** (**Funai**) is at Av. Joaquim Nabuco, 294 – go there to request authorization (seldom given) to visit indigenous reservations. ☎ 92-633-3132.

For maps (needed for the deeper Amazon trips) the best option is a guy named **Djavan**, a friendly *caboclo* (rainforest inhabitant) who circulates around the **Praça São Sebastião** every day from 8:30 am to 5 pm. He charges $5-7 per map. ☎ 92-9169-7414.

Staying Safe in the City

Manaus can be dangerous in certain areas or at certain times. At night (after about 10-11 pm) be careful around the **port area** and the **cathedral area** in the Centro, especially toward the east bordering the **Igarapé dos Educandos**, and south of Avenida Floriano Peixoto. To the east of the **Opera House** there are prostitution zones and the streets are dark, with some rough-looking locals

Gringos stand out in Manaus, and even more so outside the city. Be wary of locals who spot you and might request money. Avoid getting drunk and wandering around alone since that is exactly what muggers look for here. There is good policing around the Opera House and the São Sebastião Church, with sporadic patrols in the surrounding area. Keep your watch in your pocket after 10 pm and walk in groups. Other safe areas at night are the **Praça Congresso**, which fills up with a young crowd, and **Praça Cidade**, with food stands. Taxis are a good idea at night in the Centro.

Upscale **Ponta Negra** is policed day and night. The poor **Eastern Zone** is best avoided altogether. In the port zone, Centro and Ponta Negra, there is a lot of prostitution. This activity is legal, and unaccompanied males will likely be approached. If it bothers you, a polite refusal should be enough to get the message across.

Travelers have reported petty theft even in the finest hotels. Use the hotel safes for valuables. For medical emergencies a very good hospital is **Hospital Adventista de Manaus** on Rua Governador Danilo Areosa, 139, in the Distrito Industrial neighborhood (☎ 92-237-7076).

You will almost certainly be approached by local guides. Licensed guides have an ID card policed by the guides themselves to prevent counterfeits, and you can always find out if there are serious complaints against them from **Amazonastur**.

Crooked guides tend to work the airport and river port, and even big, established companies sometimes get complaints. Conventional wisdom is to avoid hiring guides off the street, but I have found excellent guides that way. The most common problem is getting a different package than you paid for (i.e., they promise dolphins and you don't see any), or even having the guide vanish with your cash.

If you register a complaint with Amazonastur or with the police (there are bilingual Tourist Police in the main areas), they will investigate. You may not get your money back, but at least it discourages rip-offs. Make plans in advance and don't rush into anything, most of all a trip into the rainforest. Ask for photos and a written description of the trip. Once you are outside Manaus, your welfare will depend on your own good judgment and the skill of your guide.

Staying Safe in the Jungle

Keep in mind that you are required to get approval from the Indigenous Affairs Department (Funai) to visit indigenous communities, and the process is slow. As a result, most tour guides (and indigenous villages) ignore the law, but you do so at your own risk!

For some destinations you will need a yellow fever vaccination (carry your certificate), which is probably not a bad idea if you go anywhere in Amazonia, though the risk is small. You need to get vaccinated at least 10 days in advance. Anti-malarial pills are recommended but get a doctor's advice. There is not much malaria, yellow fever, or cholera around Manaus and the lower Rio Negro, but there is in the deep jungle – in that case it can be fatal. A tetanus booster and hepatitis vaccinations are wise, if a doctor recommends them.

Candiru *(Takedashingen620)*

Piranhas tend to be found in shady, still water, and are rarely where there are alligators, their natural enemies. If you swim anywhere in the Amazon, you should also be careful for stingrays (not to mention certain other dangerous fish), but normally your guides will know where it is safe.

In remote areas there is a fish you won't want to meet, called the *candiru*. This spiny fish is extremely voracious and is feared because it enters bodily orifices – avoid urinating in the water, which can attract them.

Be careful what you touch and don't wander off alone, since certain spiders and scorpions are nearly invisible, while dangerous snakes such as anacondas rarely attack groups but may strike a single person. Never handle any wildlife (except tame parrots or monkeys at the lodges). Alligators are generally not dangerous when sitting with their mouth open – they do that because they just ate.

Vitamin-B tablets ward off mosquitoes – start taking them a few days before your trip and continue until you return. Leprosy exists in remote regions. Dysentery a can be dangerous; consider taking a course of flagyl against parasites on long trips (easily obtained at any Brazilian pharmacy) if your doctor so advises. Drink only mineral water, boiled water or, if all else fails, water treated with tablets, and watch what you eat.

Tour Agencies & Guides

Tour guides are everywhere in Manaus, but big signs do not mean quality. Often smaller outfits or independent guides are more willing to customize your trip.

☞ Always check credentials at Amazonastur before you pay.

The following guides are among the best but it never hurts to check again before you hire one.

Amazonas Indian Turismo has been around for a long time, and is run by authentic native Amazonians, with a good reputation among other guides. While not all of their guides speak English, you can probably count on finding one who speaks *hengatu*, for encounters with local indigenous groups. They also offer trips to see wildlife such as dolphins and alligators. Located at Rua dos Andradas, 311. ☎ 92-633-5578.

Amazon Explorers is a good all-around travel agency. They make reservations at lodges and sell air and boat tickets, offering a wide range of options, some more costly than others. Find them at a kiosk in the Centro at Praça Tenreiro Aranha (☎ 92-613-1210) or their headquarters at Rua Nhamundá, 21 (☎ 92-232-3052). Their website is www.amazonexplorers.com.br.

Amazon Nut Safaris has a good reputation for more extensive or luxury trips to the Anavilhanas Archipelago and other places. They operate their own river travel service as well as a jungle lodge. See their kiosk at the airport or the main office at Avenida Beira Mar, 43, in the São Raimundo neighborhood. www.amazonnut.com, ☎ 92-234-5860.

Gero's Tour has grown from an independent operator to a full-fledged agency, and proprietor Geraldo Mesquita has a strong reputation. His specialties include the Juma and Mamori regions (with excellent sport fishing), but he can also book all sorts of other trips, including expeditions up the Rio Negro. Contact him at geromesquita@hotmail.com or ☎ 92-9983-6273.

For deep jungle expeditions, get in touch with **Gilson Feliciano**, of **Famazon River Charter** (famazonrivercharter@yahoo.com.br). With contacts among indigenous groups and former slave communities, Gilson can organize trips of 10 days or more. A trained agronomist who speaks English, he works with university researchers on scientific missions into the rainforest as well as giving lectures. E-mail him at famazonrivercharter@yahoo.com.br. He occasionally works with **Negrotur**, alongside the **Hotel Tropical in Ponta Negra**.

Luis Sérgio de Lima is an honest and smart independent guide who can arrange just about any kind of trip you want. An English speaker, he has excellent friendships with indigenous tribes in remote regions and he will haggle prices down for you. His client list included the television program *Survivor*. Contact him at sergiotour@hotmail.com or ☎ 92-9115-3910, or try his partner Jinny at jinnykelly@hotmail.com. He is at Rua Hermínio Barbosa Number, 30, in São Lázaro (Southern Zone), 10 minutes from the *Centro* by taxi, but he's always downtown and will come to you.

For a city guide try **Sergio Angel Junior** – he speaks several languages and can show you the best of Manaus. He is also good for trips to nearby Presidente Figueiredo (see *Side-Trips*), and he knows where the best caverns and waterfalls are. ☎ 92-8133-9978.

Festivals & Events

Saint Sebastian's Day is a family event in the week leading up to January 20th at the square beside the Opera House facing St. Sebastian's Church. There are musical presentations and stalls selling religious items, food, and drinks, with a fair-sized crowd. Prior to the main day there are poetry readings, raffles, and musical shows.

Carnival in February or March is lively, with a Sambadrome, luxurious regalia and *samba*. There are huge floats and the competition is intense – some schools, such as **Mocidade Independente de Aparecida**, have been around for decades. Aparacida is at Rua Ramos Ferreira in Aparecida (no number) with *ensaios* (rehearsals) close to Carnival on Tuesday through Friday and Sunday from 7:30-11 pm. Two different schedules for Sunday, for example.

On June 29, Manaus celebrates **Saint Peter's Procession**, which for more than 50 years has brought devotees of the fisherman's saint together in a boat procession up the Rio Negro. An image of Saint Peter, painted by the Amazonian artist Branco e Silva, is displayed on the lead boat, and followed by hundreds of others. Departing from Manaus Harbor, the procession passes up the Rio Negro past the São Raimundo and Compensa neighborhoods, to Ponta do Ismael.

THE PARINTINS BOI-BUMBA FESTIVAL

PARINTINS
CAPRICHOSO

Taking place in the last week of June, this is the most famous local celebration. On the island of Parintins, in the middle of the jungle, the bull-headed *boi-bumbás* battle it out for a crowd of 35,000 spectators at the Bumbadrome (*bumbádromo*), a kind of stadium. Each wearing acostume shaped like a bull's head, the two contenders, bull Garantido (red), and bull Caprichoso (blue), clash in a symbolic dancing competition. Each team has three hours to present its performance.

One of the strangest parts of the festival is that one side has to stay perfectly still while the other performs. Otherwise, they will lose points for their team. All the while, the two teams are separated in the stadium by red and blue. You will not be allowed to enter one side or the other wearing the wrong color – use only neutral white to go back and forth. Everywhere you go in the city, the colors stand out as symbols of whose side you are on. The blocks of revelers are separated in "corrals," and nobody will even speak the name of the other side during the contest, calling them the "*bois contrários*," which means "opposite bulls."

All around them, thousands of costumed revelers dressed as snakes, birds, Amazon queens and princes, and allegorical floats act out a version of the *bumba-meu-boi* festival to contagious drum beating. The story of the dance is that a pregnant Catarina urges her husband to kill a prized bull because she wants to eat its tongue. Her husband, Francisco, a humble man, complies. When the killing is discovered, the plantation owner sends indigenous warriors out to kill Francisco. Desperate, he seeks out a medicine man to raise the bull to life. The festival is the allegorical resurrection of the slain *bumbá*. Each of the bulls takes about three hours to tell its story after a fireworks display.

More important than Carnival to the region, the costumes spare no expense and creativity, changing every year, while vestiges of this festival linger with mini-*bumbás* staged at rustic parties and dance halls throughout the year.

Parintins, where the festival takes place, is an island 242 miles/420 km down the Amazon river, accessed by riverboats that take nearly 24 hours and direct regional flights taking about an hour and 20 minutes from Manaus. While you can rent a room from locals on the island, the best options for lodging are the hotel boats that chug along the river to Parintins from Manaus.

To go to this spectacular festival, you need to make reservations months ahead of time, starting in about January, because it is extremely popular. Tickets are sold in Manaus at the Bradesco bank branch at Cachoerinha. There is also free seating but, due to the huge demand, this is not recommended. Before and after the performances the city literally is divided (good naturedly) into red and blue. Pick a side and stick with it.

For more on Parantins see *Side-Trips*, below. Information is available from Fumtur. ☎ 92-633-2850. The Parintins Tourist Information service can be reached at ☎ 92-533-4400 or 92-533-1805.

Where to Stay

Hotel Avenida, Av. Amazonas, 2416, ☎ 92-533-1279; **Hotel Palace**, Rua Agostino Cunha, 2539, ☎ 92-533-2737; **Hotel Samuama**, Rua Senador Alvaro Maia, 174, Downtown, ☎ 92-533-2826; **Hotel Torres de Melo**, Rua Paes de Andrade, 356, ☎ 92-533-1779; **Pousada Ilha Bela**, Rua Agostinho Cunha, 2539, ☎ 92-533-2737.

The **Birthday of Manaus**, or **Boi-Manaus Party**, is celebrated for three consecutive days starting Oct 24. A mix of Boi-Bumbá with Carnival, this spectacular Amazonian street party attracts over 40,000 people to the grandstands. As with Carnival in the Northeast, costumed revelers (here the costume is called *tururi*, not *abadá*) boogie after the *trio elétricos*, a flatbed truck with loudspeakers. If you don't buy a *tururi*, you have to watch from the sidelines, but you get to dance and enjoy the parade. About 150,000 people gather in the **Sambadrome**, at the Manaus Convention Center, for this mega-Boi-Bumbá party where singers and bands hold court with the powerful speakers of the *trios* and move the crowd in a dazzling parade.

See the *Guaraná Festival* in Maués and the *Cupuaçu Festival* in Presidente Figueiredo, below.

Sightseeing

★★★**Amazonas Opera House** is the most splendid example of architecture in the Amazon region. Inaugurated in 1896 during the rubber boom, it is a symbol of the wealth that flowed into Manaus during this period. The Opera House was designed in Portugal and built almost entirely from imported materials. The asphalt around the theater is mixed with rubber to muffle the sound of late-coming carriages during performances. At Rua Tapajós, Praça São Sebastião, it is open Monday through Saturday 9 am-4 pm. ☎ 92-622-2420.

Amazonas Opera House (Galen Frysinger)

British engineers built the ★**Floating Port** (Porto Flutuante), at Avenida Marquês de Santa Cruz, 264, during the rubber boom. The purpose was to deal with deep fluctuations of the Rio Negro during the rainy season. Near the international dock there are bronze markers showing the river levels each year since 1913. There are several interesting and elegant old buildings here, but at the time of writing the **Port Museum** (Museu de Porto), at Rua Boulevard Vivaldo Lima, 81, with exhibits on Amazon River exploration and how the port was built, had been closed indefinitely. ☎ 92-633-3433.

The **Customs Warehouse** (Alfândega) was built in Liverpool and shipped piecemeal. It opened in 1906. This daunting building and **Moria Guard Tower** were built in the same style as London architecture during the period. Rua Marquês de Santa Cruz. ☎ 92-232-3330.

★★**Rio Negro Palace** is an impressive and eccentric old mansion built by the German rubber merchant Waldemar Schotz at the end of the 19th century. It houses the **Rio Negro Palace Cultural Center**, with expositions, shows, theater and cultural events. Inside, it is gorgeously decorated and outside there are replicas of a *caboclo* (rainforest inhabitant) home, a rubber smoker, medicinal plants, and an exhibit on *guaraná* production (*guaraná* is a berry-like fruit used to make a popular soft drink in Brazil). Open Tuesday through Friday 10 am-5 pm, and weekends 4 pm-9 pm. Avenida Sete de Setembro, 1546, about a 15-minute walk from the port area. ☎ 92-622-2880.

Justice Palace, a colorful building on one of the main thoroughfares, was built in 1900 by Governor Eduardo Ribeiro as part of major revamping of the city during the boom. It still serves as a courthouse. Avenida Eduardo Ribeiro, 901. ☎ 92-622-2588.

★The **City Clock** (Relógio Municipal) was imported from Switzerland and put up in 1927. It is on Avenida Eduardo Ribeiro, near the port. Stalls here sell food and drink to locals until early in the morning. Avoid wandering here alone at night.

Liberty Palace (Paço de Liberdade) is also called the Municipal Palace (Paço Municipal). It was built from around 1874 and served as the Provincial Governor's Palace, and later the Republican Governor's after the fall of the crown. Since 1971, it has been the City Hall. It is one of the earliest Neoclassical works in Manaus. Praça D. Pedro II.

The **State Public Library** (Biblioteca Pública Estadual) was built between 1904 and 1907 and is worth a look inside. The floors are in light and dark wood chevrons, symbolizing the junction of the Rio Simões and the Rio Negro. The library is open 8 am-5:30 pm Monday through Friday. Rua Barroso, number 57. ☎ 92-234-0588.

The **Military Police Headquarters** (Quartel da Polícia Militar) dates from 1867. When Getúlio Vargas took power over the country in the 1930s the building was turned into a school again, but during the 1940s the police managed to get it back. At this scenic square, a group of writers in 1954 gathered to found the Early Morning Club, whose office is the big tree (called a *mulateiro*) in front of the building. At night it gets seedy here. The building is at Praça Heliodoro Balbi.

★**Usina Chaminé Cultural Center** is a sewage treatment plant built by the English company Manáos Improvements in 1910. Locals, angry over the rates, ransacked the headquarters at which point the company fled Brazil. Today it contains a cultural center. Open Tuesday through Friday 10 am-5 pm and weekends 4-8 pm, at Rua Isabel near the waterfront, where you can stroll. ☎ 92-633-3026 or 92-234-7877.

THE FLAVORS OF THE WESTERN AMAZON

Manaus is famous for its regional breakfast: eggs, bacon, sausages, breads, juices, sweets, preserves, chocolates filled with fruits, and ice cream made from local fruits. There are an amazing variety of fresh fruits, such as those of the *tucumã* palm, the reddish *jambo* fruit, or the cooked heart of palm called *pupunha*. There is porridge made of banana called ***mingau de banana***, and a white corn porridge called

mungunzá. Manioc is served at all meals, and is called ***macaxeira*** here. This starchy root finds its way into cakes, puddings or tapioca, into pancakes called ***beiju***, or mixed with the pulp of the nourishing *açaí* fruit.

For a milder flavor try ***cupuaçu***, which is also served as a mousse or in ice cream. You should try ***tacacá***, sold at food stalls around the city. This is an indigenous broth made from fermented manioc juice, with a gelatinous blob of clear manioc jelly (you can order it without the jelly, or *sem goma*, if you want), boiled *jambú* leaves which numb your mouth, and dried shrimp – usually with a dose of hot pepper. You eat it with a wooden skewer and drink it straight from a black gourd.

Tacacá is also used as a sauce for one of the very spiny ***jaraquí*** river fish, served fried with green spices, manioc flour, and *baião-de-dois*, a mixture of beans and rice. This is one of the tastiest dishes in the Amazon, but there there are many other kinds of fish: *pacú*, *piraruca*, *curimata* or *tambaquí*. Locals commonly eat fish with a fork and a spoon, and there is a traditional saying: "*come jaraquí e não sai mais daqui*," which means "eat *jaraqui* and you'll never leave again." There is even a word for the odor fish leaves on your breath: *pitiú*.

You can also try the fried bananas sold everywhere or stop at a juice bar for an energetic ***guaraná***, made in various ways from Amazonian berries. Or drink guaraná in its soft drink form – here it is both stronger and tastier than the bubbly version served throughout Brazil.

★**São Sebastião Church**, completed in 1888, has paintings from Italy by artists Silvio Centofanti and Francisco Campanella. On the ceiling is a depiction of the martyrdom of Saint Sebastian. There is only one bell tower because the master builder ran off with the cash. Rua 10 de Julho, 567, on Praça São Sebastião. ☎ 92-232-4572.

São Sebastião Church (Salles Neto)

Museums

★★The **Natural Sciences Museum** (Museu de Ciências Naturais) has an aquarium with a tank of *piracarú*, a river fish six feet long and with scales the size of potato chips. There are interesting displays of Amazon wildlife here as well. At the Cachoeira Grande colony. A taxi from the Centro will cost about $10 both ways – ask the driver to wait though! You can see everything in under 45 minutes. There is a shop selling local handicrafts. Open Monday through Saturday 9 am-5 pm. ☎ 92-644-2799.

★★The **Indigenous Museum** (Museu de Índio) has 1,500 artifacts made by groups along the Rio Negro. There is a shop that sells authentic indigenous products. Open Monday through Friday 8:30-11:30 am and 2:30-5:30 pm, Saturday 8:30-11:30 am. Rua Duque de Caxias, 356. You can get there on foot or by bus. ☎ 92-234-1422.

Adventures on Land

The **Adolpho Ducke Botanical Garden** (Jardim Botânico) is a well-equipped forest reserve park with many Amazon species. It is about 40 minutes by bus or car from the Centro, at Rua Uirapuru, in Cidade de Deus. For information contact Sedema, the municipal environmental authorities. ☎ 92-642-1010.

The **Army Zoo** (Zoológico do CIGS) has exhibits of Amazon wildlife such as alligators, snakes, deer, and parrots. The Army created the zoo to train its jungle warfare specialists in local flora and fauna. Open Tuesday through Sunday, 9 am-4:30 pm. Estrada de Ponta Negra, 750, in São Jorge. You can get there by bus from the Centro. ☎ 92-625-2044.

★**Mindu Municipal Park** is a huge park within the city limits and a sanctuary for the endangered monkey called the *sauim-de-coleira*. The park has footpaths, greenhouses with medicinal and aromatic herbs, an orchid house, and an overhead trail through the forest. On Sundays there is a very popular regional breakfast, with 45 separate dishes, where you can eat very well for about $4. It lasts from about 6:30-noon, with live Andean music and merchants selling handicrafts. You can get there by taking bus 407 from the Police Plaza or a taxi. Rua Perimetral, Parque 10. ☎ 92-236-7702.

★★**The Science Grove** (Bosque da Ciência), part of the Amazon Research Institute, is a wildlife sanctuary with alligators, manatees, otters, sloths, monkeys, electric eels, a lake with turtles, and trails that take you for a view of the grove's lush greenery. There is a wooden hut with an arts and crafts shop that has good prices. Located at Rua Otávio Cabral in the Aleixo neighborhood. Guided tours Tuesday-Friday 9-12 am then 2-5 pm, weekends and holidays 9 am-5 pm. It takes 15 minutes by taxi, which should cost about $4 each way, or you can take bus 505 or 519 from the Centro. ☎ 92-643-3192.

Adventures on the Water

Beaches

★**Praia de Ponta Negra** is an urbanized area with a well-lit beach, safe parking lots and trails near the **Hotel Tropical**. Later in the day this is a very popular night spot with music and bars and a lively crowd, especially on Sunday.

Short River Trips

There are two very common day-trips on the Amazon river. You can get tickets at the port or arrange them with any travel guide or agency in town.

★★★**Janauari Lake Ecological Park** (Parque Ecológico do Lago Janauari) is on the Rio Negro about 40 minutes by boat from Manaus. The lake is surrounded by forest, which is criss-crossed with streams and swamps you can explore by canoe. Here you will see the water lilies floating in shallow tropical pools, called *vitoria-régias*, the largest and most famous Amazonian water plants. They can reach up to six feet in diameter. Ask your guide to demonstrate the sounding of the *samaueira*, a towering tree up to 180 feet tall with a thick trunk that acts like a drum. It can be heard for miles in the forest and was used for centuries by the indigenous groups and rubber tappers to communicate. In the vicinity are floating restaurants where you can try traditional Amazon meals, or buy local handicrafts. The trip usually costs $20-25 per person and leaves every day from 9 am to 3 pm (you need to ask around to make special arrangements on Monday as this is normally an off-day). Normally, the trip to the park includes a visit to the junction of the Solimões and Negro rivers. It takes about 45 minutes by boat from the capital. This is best arranged with a travel guide.

★★The **Junction of the Rio Solimões and Rio Negro** (Econtro das Águas) is a natural phenomenon caused by the meeting of the two main rivers that join to form the Amazon River. For almost six miles/10 km, the two rivers run together in totally separate streams at different velocities and temperatures, creating a striking two-tone effect. The muddy, yellowish one is the Rio Solimões, and the dark, clear one is the Rio Negro. To get there, buy a ticket at the Floating Port.

Long River Trips

See the special section on *River Boat Adventures* below for full details on how to plan and enjoy a genuine Amazon river expedition.

Sport Fishing

The Amazon is one of the best destinations for freshwater sport fishing in the world. The waters here are teeming with sport fish, including the famed peacock bass, the *paiara*, a hard-hitting and acrobatic game fish that can weigh up to 20 pounds, the *pacu*, a big, powerful fish with jumps and long runs, and the *jaú*, the world's largest catfish that can weigh as much as a person. A good spot near town is the **Lake Balbina** reservoir (near Presidente Figueiredo, see *Side-Trips*) where you can catch peacock bass year-round.

From mid-October through the end of November, some local guides can take you to **Rio Mamori** and **Juma**, and **Tucunaré Lake**, 93.21 miles/ 150 km away on Highway BR 319 toward Porto Velho, with lots of *pirarucu* (that can grow up to nine feet), *piranha*, *surubim*, *aruanâ* and peacock bass. This trip takes from three to five days.

Bring a raincoat, mosquito repellent, a hat, camera or video camera, film, sunglasses, sunscreen, long-sleeved shirt, shorts, long pants and tennis shoes. In many regions only catch-and-release is permitted, while other areas are closed.

There is an effort to maintain catch-and-release standards everywhere in the Amazon, and even if your particular outfitter doesn't insist, you will be doing the region a great service by respecting the wildlife and maintaining populations for future generations.

For more extensive trips, large floating lodges or lodges on land offer full amenities such as name-brand rods and tackle. Trips start with a flight to the lodge from Manaus. Most or all meals and drinks are provided, but not tips or other incidental expenses.

You can sometimes customize your trip for fly-fishing or for lures. Packages can be quite expensive, starting out at about $2,500 for a week-long safari-style jungle expedition with limited comfort and amenities (but unmatched fishing), ranging up to $5,000 or more for a luxury floating lodge with all amenities including air-conditioning and satellite phone.

The outfitters below are recommended and can simplify your trip quite a bit:

Acute Angling, contact Paul Reiss (☎ 866-832-2987) or Garry Reiss (☎ 866-431-1668). **B&B World Wide Fishing Adventures**, 1416 1/2 E. 10th Place, The Dalles, Oregon 97058, www.wheretofish.com, ☎ toll free 888-479-2277, or international ☎ 541-296-9144. **Peacock Bass Trips**, 1169 Tarborlake Dr., Lexington, KY 40502, ☎ 888-626-2966 or 859-221-6360. **Ron Speed's Adventures Inc.**, 1013 Country Lane, Malakoff, TX 75148, www.ronspeedsadventures.com, ☎ 903-489-1656. **Ecofishing USA** represents the high-tech **Yanna Lodge**, www.ecofishingusa.com or www.yanna.com.br.

THE PEACOCK BASS: THE BAD BOY OF THE AMAZON

Forget the piranha. The most famous fish in the Amazon is the peacock bass. Not really a bass, the *tucunaré* is technically a cichlid. One of the fiercest freshwater fighters anywhere in the world, its red-eyed image is found painted around the region and if you have a chance to land one you won't forget it. They're big – 10 or 15 pounds is not uncommon, and larger ones exist. *Caboclos* (rainforest inhabitants) and indigenous tribes used homemade lures from feathers years before artificial bait became common in Brazil, and today everybody has their own recommendation for lures. The peacock bass lurks in the quieter lakes during the dry season and migrates to the *igapós* (flooded forest) when the river is full. They don't like the heat, and usually (but not always) dive down when it's hot, which happens to be where piranhas are found as well. Where there aren't lakes, they take shelter in running water behind rocks and tree trunks, and they don't like rapids. As a rule, you will have better luck in the smaller waterways. This aggressive fish, which can be caught by fly-fishing, strikes with explosive power. There are a few varieties – black-striped, butterfly, speckled and royal – but they all act the same way: mean. Able to snap 30-lb monofilament with a smile, these river thugs often break rods and mangle hooks. Their behavior is legendary. I have seen two of these monsters hauled in on the same line.

Where to Eat

Manaus is a large city with a good selection of options. Breakfast is one of the best meals, with regional specialties made from manioc and fresh tropical fruits and juices. There are street stalls where you can eat cheaply, from fried bananas with cinnamon and sugar to the famous local soup *tacacá*, made from fermented manioc, *jambu* leaves and shrimp. The best option is the local river fish, in *sopadas* (a kind of stew), grilled or fried.

Behind the ★★★**Municipal Market** ($) is one of the cheapest and best spots

Mercado Municipal

for fried fish at any of various outdoor stands. Don't be scared off! It's really good.

For a taste of the authentic Amazonian regional breakfast (budget hotels don't have the real thing) try the **Café Regional** ($$) on Rua Costa Azevedo, 369, near the Opera House. ☎ 92-233-1028. Closed on Sunday. Another great option for the regional breakfast on Sundays (when everywhere else is closed) is **Mindu Park** (see *Sightseeing*).

To try *tacacá* soup, the best in the city is ★**Point do Tacacá** ($) where for about a dollar you can slurp down a bowl. If you like chilies, ask for the *só-come-quem-pode*, a fried snack made with flour, shrimp and plenty of cayenne pepper – the name means "only for those who can eat it"! There is almost always a crowd at this simple food stall; even the Governor comes here. It is in front of the Amazonian Academy of Letters, on the corner of Rua Tapajós and Ramos Ferreira. Open every day but Saturday, 1:30 pm-5:30 pm. ☎ 92-633-2846 or 92-233-4433.

A good juice bar is **Sabores Lanches** ($), on Rua Barroso, 86 (on the corner of Henrique Mattos). Try the *cupuaçu* or *graviola*. Open Monday through Saturday from 7 am-6:30 pm (closes on Saturday when the crowd thins out, around 4 pm). ☎ 92-233-9134.

For ice cream, try **Glacial** ($) with various branches through the city, including mobile vendors in the public squares. A good bet is *cupuaçu*, but there are many options. There are two right across the street from one another, on Avenida Sete de Setembro and Getulio Vargas in the Centro, open early till late.

For a greasy hamburger, try **African House** ($), which also serves snacks or refreshing natural *guaraná* juice on Praça São Sebastião. Closed on Sunday.

There is a decent plate-by-weight lunch buffet with a fair selection at **Confeiraria Alemá** ($$), a casual eatery on the west side of Rua José Paranaguá at the Praça de Policia.

★★**Galo Carijó** ($$), in the port district, is nearly always packed for lunch. The specialty here is fish. Try the *jaraqui* with *baião de dois*, manioc flour and *tacacá* sauce. Delicious! You can also try the local *guaraná* soft drink, which is more potent than elsewhere in Brazil. This is a really simple place at Rua dos Andradas, 536.

An excellent option is ★**Churracaria Búfalo** ($$$), a *rodizio*-style steakhouse with 25 types of meats and a buffet with sushi. Open Monday through Saturday for lunch (11 am-3 pm) and dinner (6-11 pm), and on Sunday for lunch, at Av. Joaquim Nabuco, 628A, in the Centro. ☎ 92-633-3773.

Toro Loco ($$$) in Ponta Negra is a good *rodizio*-style steakhouse with buffet on Avenida de Turismo, close to the Hotel Tropical. Closed Sunday. ☎ 92-631-2557.

The **Taj Mahal** hotel has a café with sandwiches for lunch ($), and a revolving restaurant upstairs ($$$) with a 360-degree view of the city, open for lunch and dinner. Avenida Getúlio Vargas, 741. ☎ 92-627-3737.

★**Florentina** ($$-$$$) is a popular place for tourists and locals on the Praça da Policia, serving Italian food. It's a little pricey compared to others in Manaus but is one of the best in town.

For pizza, snacks, and beer, **Pizzaria Scarola** ($$-$$$), on Avenida Getulio Vargas (near the Taj Mahal Hotel), has an outside patio open from the afternoon until late.

Another good pizza place is on São Sebastião Square near the Opera House, called **Splash Pizza** ($$). Open all week from 10 am-2 am, on Rua José Clemente, 500. ☎ 92-642-5000.

Where to Go Out

Manaus is fairly seedy at night. The night tends to end early in the Centro, around 11 pm or so, but you can find groups around the plazas drinking cans of beer at all hours, and until about 10 pm there is usually some low-key cultural event or live show near the **Opera House**.

Check the monthly city guide, in Portuguese, called ***A Bússola***, available at **Amazonastur**. It lists what is going on (typically run-down nightclubs playing *forró* or *calypso).*

The best nightlife in town is at **Ponta Negra** (on the road from downtown, called Estrada de Ponta Negra) near the **Hotel Tropical**, where there are nightclubs and outdoor bars along the beach. It is busy every day until late, especially on Sunday when everything else in town seems to shut down. The bars there come and go, but you can always find something wild happening.

A wonderful old dive on São Sebastião Square is **Bar do Armando**, a place where locals go and take over the sound system with its dozen loudspeakers, but newcomers are always welcome to join in the fun. The beer is served ice cold. Here you will find stacks of beer crates, tin tables, and a certain charming ugliness that makes it one of the best options in Manaus. Rua 10 de Julho, 593. Open till midnight.

More upscale, with a very lively young crowd on the weekends, is **Bodega 101**, a bar and restaurant with an outdoor area on Lauro Cavalcante, 101. ☎ 92-232-1821.

Another traditional dive, but with very good snacks, that fills up in the late afternoons is **KatiQuero**, near the port on Rua Floriano Peixoto and José Paranaguá. But this is not the best neighborhood to be wandering around at night.

One of the most famous clubs is **Coração Blue**, where just about anything goes – prostitutes, the gay crowd, students, bohemians, and gringos, but thankfully no violence. It's the closest thing to the jungle inside Manuas. Estrada de Ponta Negra, 3701. ☎ 92-658-4057.

Where to Stay

Lodging is one of the downsides to Manaus. There is a steep drop in quality at the cheaper places – go as upscale as you can to avoid an atrocious suprise. You can get a discount if you pay cash, and it's worth haggling a bit, as there is almost never full occupancy at any hotel in town. Almost all the "budget" hotels in the Centro are in fact motels – hourly places geared toward the sex trade. The hotels below are your best options in town.

Hotel Tropical

★★★**Hotel Tropical Manaus** ($$$$) is the finest resort in Manaus, with its own pier, pool, and private zoo in the *ponta negra* area. Even if you don't stay, you can take a look around at the animals, including an ocelot, monkeys and exotic birds. ☎ 92-659-5000.

Hotel Manaós ($$-$$$), at Avenida Eduardo Ribeiro, 881, is conveniently near the Opera House and, while not the most modern, at least it is comfortable, with air-conditioning, cable TV, laundry services and Internet. It's worth a look. ☎ 92-633-5744.

The **Plaza Hotel** ($$-$$$) is comfortable, safe and clean, though you might get a better deal elsewhere. Conveniently in the Centro on Avenida Getúlio Vargas, 215.

The best view of the city is at the **Taj Mahal** ($$$). The rotating restaurant on the top floor is an option for dining. Avenida Getúlio Vargas, 741. ☎ 92-633-1010.

Hotel Krystal ($$) is clean and a good compromise for price and quality with a nice breakfast. In front of the State Library on Rua Barros, 54, just a few blocks from the Opera House and near the port. ☎ 92-233-7535.

The **Ana Cassia Palace** ($$) has a pool and is a decent low-end place. at Rua dos Andradas, 14. ☎ 92-622-3637.

Hotel Rei Solomão ($) has air-conditioning and is not too bad for the price. Rua Doutor Moreira 119. ☎ 92-234-7374.

The **Hotel de Turismo 10 de Julho** ($) is on a safe street, a short walk from the Opera House, but only the upstairs rooms with air-conditioning are worth it unless you are really broke. This is one of the few hotels in Manaus that does not allow prostitutes. ☎ 92-232-6280.

Hotel Novotel Manaus ($$-$$$), on Avenida Mandii, 4, is out of the way in the industrial district, but a very good hotel close to the airport and only 4.8 miles/eight km from downtown. ☎ 92-613-1211.

Jungle Lodges

Jungle lodges combine comfort with proximity to the jungle and are the recommended way to visit the Western Amazon. Transportation is by river boat from Manaus (in itself a great trip), and at the lodge you generally have a range of activities – alligator spotting, canoe trips and instructional tours. They are designed to have as little impact on the surrounding environment as possible. Jungle lodges can be a bit tame if you are looking for rugged adventure, and if eating food cooked in river water or sleeping in a hammock over an ant pile is not your idea of fun, stick with the lodges. Most offer day-trips as an option (no overnight stay), with lunch and sightseeing for around $60-70 per person. They leave from the pier at the **Hotel Tropical** in Ponta Negra. While the overnights are more expensive, they are a better deal because you usually get two full days of activity.

Acajatuba Jungle Lodge ($$$-$$$$) on a tributary of the Rio Negro and Acajatuba Lake is a popular lodge with rustic wooden cabins, elevated footbridges, and plenty of parrots and macaws. At night there is battery power (no generators) so you can hear the jungle. There are trips to the Anavilhanas Archipelago. Transfer to and from Manaus, meals, and bilingual guide included. www.acajatuba.com.br, ☎ 92-642-0358 or 92-9152-9248 (24 hours).

Acajatuba
www.tokyo.c

Acajatuba Jungle Lodge

Ariaú Amazon Towers ($$$$-$$$$$) was a concept developed by Jacques Cousteau, who loved this region. Located on the Rio Ariaú and the Rio Negro, two hours by boat from Manaus, the lodging is spacious and very comfortable, with luxury suites and full amenities high up in the treetops – perfect for a honeymoon. There are wooden walkways into the jungle for spotting wildlife. www.ariau.tur.br, ☎ 0800-702-5005. There is an office in Manaus at Rua Leonardo Malcher, 699 (☎ 92-234-7308) and in the US at 905 Brickell Bay Dr. Ste. 1930, in Miami FL 33131.

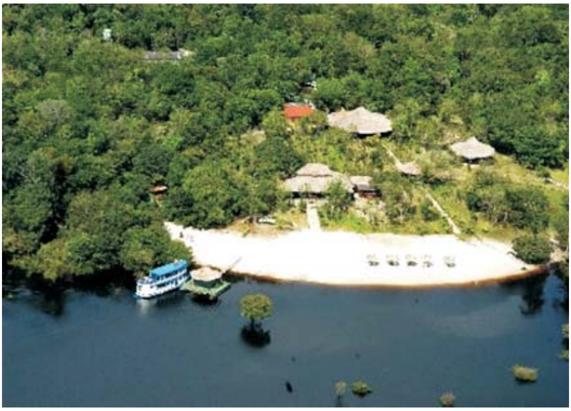
Lago Salvador Lodge ($$$$) is a half-hour by boat from Manaus on Salvador Lake. It has 12 comfortable apartments with 36 beds, restaurant, good services, electric power, radio communication and leisure options such as nature walks, jungle survival training, presentations on medicinal plants, and canoe trips. ☎ 92-658-4221, lagosalvador@internext.com.br.

Tiwa Amazonas Ecoresort (BWeem)

Tiwa Amazonas Ecoresort ($$$$-$$$$$) has miles of trails through unspoiled forest where you can swim in Rio Negro and enjoy the wildlife. The resort is impressive, with lodging on stilts right over the river. There are all sorts of leisure and sporting activities, including wooden platforms and paths through the canopy, pool, canoes, folk-dancing and trips to Ponta Negra. There are also special trips to most of the main destinations around Manaus. www.tiwaamazone.com, ☎ 92-3088-4676.

Jungle Othon Palace Hotel ($$$$) lets you to spend the day exploring the jungle. Then you can return to a luxury atmosphere with restaurant and bar, hot showers, refrigerators, room-to-room communication, and a porch where you can fish. There is a swimming pool and and an observation deck for up-close looks at nature. They have an office in Manaus at Rua Saldanha Marinho, 700, in the Centro. www.junglepalace.com.br, ☎ 92-633-6200 or 92-3087-8821,

The **Amazon Ecopark Lodge** ($$$$) is one of the best-known lodges on the Rio Tarumã, about an hour from Manaus, with six miles of rainforest trails. It is adjacent to the Monkey Jungle park (in itself a popular day-trip to see monkeys). Accommodations are rustic but have



Amazon Ecopark Lodge

full services. The rooms, with porch and bathroom, have separate entrances, are all air-conditioned, with hot shower and screened windows, and the entire lodge is decorated with indigenous crafts. There are offices in Manaus (☎ 92-9146-0594, 92-9146-0595, or 92-9117-1700) and in Rio de Janeiro (☎ 21-2547-7742). info@amazonecopark.com.br.

Hotel Ecológico Terra Verde ($$) on the Tiririca river has comfortable cabins with a genuine ecological mindset. Its founder, an eccentric Polish cinematographer named Zygmunt Sulistrowski, is famous in Manaus for having refused to let state-run oil company Petrobras build a pipeline over his land despite huge offers of cash. This is one of the more economical lodges, with nearly 31,000 acres/11,000 ha of forest, trips through the waterways, piranha fishing, alligator spotting, and other adventures. www.internext.com.br/terraverde, cepecam@internext.com.br, ☎ 92-622-7305.

What to Buy

Artindia is expensive but has a great selection of indigenous goods. It is open from 7:30 am-5 pm Monday through Friday in a distinctive old port pavilion on Praça Tendreiro Aranha downtown.

Amazonas Ecoshop next to São Sebastião Church has a good selection of deadwood products, grass-weave, and jewelry on Rua 10 de Julho, 509. ☎ 92-234-8870.

Amazonas Shopping Mall is a modern indoor shopping center with stores selling Amazon handicrafts. This has also become one of the central meeting points for locals to have a beer, especially on Sunday when there is not much to do in the city. Av. Djalma Batista, 482, in the Chapada neighborhood. ☎ 92-642-3555.

Amazonas Shopping Mall (pontanegra)

AM Precious Stones is a shop in the **Taj Mahal Hotel** where you can purchase authentic Brazilian jewelry, such as the Imperial topaz mined in Minas Gerais state. Avenida Getúlio Vargas, 741, downtown. Open daily. ☎ 92-233-5988.

Bombons Finos sells famous Amazonian chocolates with tropical fruit filling. There are shops all over the city, including the Handicrafts Fair on Avenida Eduardo Ribeiro (Sunday mornings) and a stand at the Carrefour store on Eduardo Ribeiro near the Cathedral. ☎ 92-236-2610.

Branco e Silva Arts Center has stores that sell local arts and crafts, with a gallery for expositions, restaurant and flower shop. Periodically, there are classes and workshops in arts and crafts techniques. There is a large variety of goods here, including baskets, sculpture, exotic paintings, tapestries, jute screens, *tucumã* straw work, wooden inlay, ceramics and other high-quality items for sale. Open Tuesday-Friday 9 am-6 pm, Saturday from 9 am-4 pm, and Monday 9 am-noon. Rua Recife, 1999, Parque 10. ☎ 92-236-1241.

Mercado Municipal

★The **Municipal Market** (Mercado Municipal) was built by rubber barons in 1882, and leased to the British company, Manaós Market, until 1934, when it was turned over to City Hall. A replica of *Les Halles* in Paris, the market could not be more Brazilian. There are two side-pavilions in cast iron, built to ventilate perishable foodstuffs. The market bustles with life, sights, sounds and smells, with hundreds of stalls selling exotic plants and spices such as *jambu* and *oriza*, Amazon fruits such as *guaraná*, *cupuaçu*, and *graviola*, and rows of fresh fish, including the *tambaqui* and *piracú*. The variety is dazzling. Here you can also purchase (at somewhat inflated prices), regional arts and crafts such as baskets and costume jewelry made from Amazonian seeds and woods. Open Monday through Saturday 5 am-6 pm, and Sundays and holidays 5 am-noon. Rua dos Barés, 46. ☎ 92-233-0469.

Native Original Products has locally produced goods in an upscale price range, including wood and metal décor. It's one of the nicer shops for Amazonian design. At the International Port Terminal. ☎ 92-2123-3183.

Waimiri Atroari on Rua Recife, 2305, in the Parque 10 district, is a highly recommended shop for indigenous artisans. Here you can find vegetable fiber hammocks, baskets, authentic bows and arrows, jewelry and the *tipiti* wicker tubes used to strain manioc root in the river. ☎ 92-236-1229.

Side-Trips

The Waterfalls of Presidente Figueiredo & Balbina

Not far from Manaus in the highland area of **Presidente Figueiredo** you can see the highland jungle, region filled with gullies, rapids, waterfalls, caverns and archeological sites. It is a good idea to go with a guide

Neblina Falls in Presidente Figueiredo

because the best locations are on trails anywhere from 15 minutes to about two hours into the forest. The town is 78 miles/130 km from Manaus. To get there by car, take BR-174 toward Boa Vista. Some of the attractions are in **Balbina**, a neighboring town. Turn right on AM-240 as you are entering Presidente Figueiredo to get there.

While you can take a bus, a rental car is better because the route is not difficult and there are some substantial distances between sites. In terms of cost-benefit, even with a rental car it is an inexpensive way to see the rainforest without traveling far from Manaus.

Though normally overlooked by foreign travelers, both towns have bars, restaurants and *pousadas*. Most of the sightseeing attractions are on private land and you will generally have to shell out a few reais to go in. Stay only on the trails and pay attention to your guide, as the region does have poisonous snakes, including deadly coral snakes.

A good itinerary is to spend two or three days, staying in Balbina at the **Pousada de Santuário** ($$), which has an excellent regional breakfast. Then then off to the many waterfalls for a refreshing swim or to Balbina for a day. As the topography is filled with ridges and valleys, hikes can be mild to moderately strenuous along sandy soil (muddier near the streams). If you opt for radical sports there is also rappelling and cascading in the waterfalls.

This is also one of the main regions for producing the distinctive Amazonian fruit called *cupuaçu*, with a white pulp, which is blended with ice and used to produce a refreshing drink available at any juice bar in Manaus. Every year there is a festival in honor of the fruit in May that draws thousands of people.

A recommended trail in President Figueiredo is **Iracema Falls**, off BR-174 around the 115 Km marker, and the **Macaw Falls**, farther along the same trail. If you extend your hike you can make it all the way to **Iracema Cave**.

In Balbina, the top destination is **Cachoeira do Santuário**, on a trail to the right of the highway near the 12 Km marker. Also here is a Pre-Colombian cave shelter called **Gruta de Maruata** and the scenic **Balbina Lake** (actually a hydroelectric reservoir) with sport fishing and a research center that has exhibits on local wildlife.

For local guides and information about the trip, either consult the travel guides in Manaus or call the local **Tourism Secretariat** (☎ 92-324-1158). The **Pousada de Santuário** (☎ 92-3238-6752) is at the 12 Km marker of AM-240 near the Cachoeira do Santuário. As it's the nicest place to stay in the region, reservations are suggested.

STAYING SAFE: HOSTILE NATIVES ON HIGHWAY 174

Unusual for this hospitable region of the Western Amazon, there are actually hostile indigenous groups near Manaus. The hostile tribe is 180 miles/ 300 km from town along Highway 174, which leads to Boa Vista in Roraima state, then on to Venezuela along a precarious road. The **Waimiri-Atroari** are extremely territorial and caution is required when traveling here. In 1968 they attacked and killed a group of missionaries and soldiers, sparking a series of violent encounters with the Army until a truce was called a few years later. This group, led by a Catholic priest known as Father Calleri, had 38 members, but only one survived. These travelers were reportedly eaten! Ever since this event, the Indigenous Affairs Department (Funai) has prohibited all contact with the group, while military patrols pass back and forth every half-hour to assist motorists who break down in their tribal lands. Travel along the road is prohibited at night (except for buses), and you are advised to move quickly through the Waimiri-Atroari reservation. If you go, make sure you fill up with gasoline at the last station in Jundiá at the Funai post and the 22nd Jungle Warfare Battalion just before entering the reservation. Despite their reputation as warriors, the Waimiri-Atroari are also expert artisans, highly skilled with weaving, and their products can be purchased in Manaus. The risks notwithstanding, the 540-mile/900-km highway between Porto Velho and Manaus offers a fascinating look at the Amazon. If taken all the way to Caracas, Venezuela, you will pass through indigenous lands three times the size of Italy.

River Boat Adventures

One of the best ways to see the Amazon is by river, but there is a wide variety of river transport available. Jungle expeditions are the highlight of any trip to Amazonas, and it pays to plan ahead if you want to make the most of your trip.

Most people travel only a day or two away by boat from Manaus and stay at a jungle lodge. For lodging on a longer river trip, you will usually stay in a *caboclo* (rainforest inhabitant's) home or sleep in a hammock on the boat. The farther you go, the rougher the conditions become.

What follows are details on the types of vessels used for river journeys in Amazônia. For the larger vessels, quality and comfort vary greatly, so take a look at the actual boat in port before you decide. Specialized fishing expeditions listed in this chapter tend to take large, luxury floating lodges with full amenities, using motorboats for actual angling. On open vessels, wear long pants, long-sleeved shirts, and a hat to protect against the sun.

Motorized canoes (*canoa motorizada*), up to 35 feet in length and about six feet across, are normally made of wood and equipped with 40 hp motors. Usually they are covered with an aluminum roof, and plastic sheets that can be rolled down in the rain. The crew has a skipper and a guide, with up to 10 passengers, and there is no sleeping capacity. The advantage of this type of vessel, which is used exclusively for tourism, is agility in the waterways, allowing access to many different types from rivers, small passageways through forest, lakes, *igarapés* (narrow creeks) and *igarapós* (flooded forest). Typically they are used for piranha fishing, alligator spotting, and sightseeing. The most intimate contact with nature is by canoe, especially if the motor is shut off so you can hear the forest.

Motorboats (*bote*), used for fishing and ecological trips, are up to 19 feet in length and five or six feet across, with aluminum hulls and 25 hp motors. As a rule they are not covered but might have windscreens. Smaller, they are fast and agile, making it possible to reach many different kinds of waterways, including indigenous villages, and they have enough fuel capacity to make it to the Anavilhanas Archipelago from Manaus. Crewed by a skipper and guide, motorboats hold up to four passengers comfortably, without sleeping capacity.

Speedboats (*lancha rápida*) of about 22 feet in length and six feet across, are made of aluminum and equipped with 60 or 85 hp motors. They often have a synthetic tarp roof, with plastic sheets to roll down when it rains.

The crew is a skipper and a guide, with up to 10 passengers. They have no sleeping capacity. The advantage is that, like the motorized canoes, they are agile in the narrow waterways, but much faster. They are commonly used to transport guests to the jungle hotels, indigenous villages, to the Anavilhanas Archipelago, or for lunch at the floating restaurants. As they guzzle fuel, they are a lot more expensive. Keep in mind that long trips in smaller craft such as motorboats and speedboats are not comfortable unless you stop along the way.

Regional boats (*barco regional*) are 65 feet in length and about 20 feet across, generally with a wooden hull and aluminum cover, and two or three decks. They use 114 hp or 260 hp motors, and passenger capacity varies accordingly. Regional boats are crewed by a captain, a mate, a cook and a guide, plus a skipper for a motorized canoe. Used exclusively for tourism, they are lightweight vessels despite their size and can reach most types of destinations such as rivers, lakes, igarapés, and jungle hotels. A towed motorized canoe is for exploring the smaller waterways. These are more comfortable than the smaller boats, with a galley, two bathrooms with showers, a mini-bar, freezer and dining room (generally a buffet). There is usually a deck with a shower in both covered and uncovered areas. They can take from six to 50 passengers, with overnight accommodations in hammocks strung from the deck. Normally, there is a generator and 12-volt battery on board, but power may be turned off at night.

Regional boats with cabins (*barco regional com cabine*) are identical in size but all have 260 hp motors and are equipped with cabins, allowing a choice of overnight accommodations for up to 16 passengers in hammocks or small double-berth cabins. In all other respects they are essentially the same as the regional boats.

On the regional boats, you will typically have a choice. *Cabines* are one option. They are cramped spaces, with two or four bunks, shared by other passengers, a private bathroom (sometimes air-conditioning as well). *Camarotes* are cheaper cabins without bathrooms.

A third option is to do what most locals do and sling hammocks on hooks in all directions, turning the deck into a maze of huddled passengers. If you decide to travel this way, keep an eye on your luggage and invest in mosquito netting and a light cover. Do as the locals do: get there early and mark your territory by hanging up your hammock. Some adventurous travelers find the experience of the hammocks the highlight of their trip, but this is frankly not for everyone.

What to Bring

The following supplies are a good idea for any river journey in Amazonia. Plan on bringing (or buying in Manaus) a hammock plus rope ties, raincoat, cap or hat to ward off the sun and rain, a camera or video recorder, film, sunglasses, sunscreen, mosquito repellent, personal medications, long- and short-sleeved shirts, cotton or canvas shorts, long pants (the lightweight, durable type sold in military surplus stores is handy), socks, tennis shoes or boots, a change of clothes (even on short trips due to rain), a pocket knife or buck knife, lighter or matches, binoculars, flashlight and extra batteries, compass, whistle (in case you get separated from your guide), notebook, pencil or pen, toothbrush, soap, toothpaste, canteen, swimsuit, towel, disc player for the long trips, and a rock-solid, shock-proof sense of humor. You might also bring a roll of toilet paper just in case. Finally, riverboat food is not the greatest, so bring fruit, granola, or some other non-perishable snacks. Keep in mind that all river craft will have weight limits on baggage, so check ahead and take only what you need. Don't bother carrying bottled water since the boats will usually provide it. To avoid environmental impact, local authorities request that you bring out whatever you bring in.

Deep Jungle Expeditions

For longer expeditions you really need to think about your trip as far in advance as possible.

It is in the deep jungle that you will have once-in-a-lifetime trips, meeting indigenous tribes and exploring primordial forests. Get in touch with a guide or agency and find out what the options are. There are a lot of choices, depending on where you want to go and how you want to travel. The rainforest is constantly changing, so ask your guide about the best time to go and if he is experienced in the region at that time of year.

In the deep jungle you will have much more time to explore and with planning you can get exactly what you want out of the trip – whether it is to take amazing photographs or to learn about ecology. Once there, observe your surroundings and don't touch foliage or go jumping into lakes haphazardly because there are dangerous snakes (corals, bushmasters, and anacondas, among others), arthropods (spiders and scorpions), insects (beetles and ants) and fish (piranha and stingrays, among others) that can be very hard to see. It is helps to be in good shape; you should also get proper vaccinations and consider anti-malarial drugs (all have side-effects, so weigh those against the risk after talking to a doctor).

Your guide should be trained in emergency first aid and many carry blood serum with them. Once you leave Manaus, you very quickly enter the endless rainforest. Find out from your guide what kind of boats you will be using (canoes, with motor shut off are the best for exploring the *igarapés*), if your guide speaks English (there is sometimes a surcharge for other languages), and what exactly is included in the price.

Get them to list everything – fuel (which is expensive), provisions, lodging and guide fees. There is no sense in bringing unnecessary items with you that will just bog you down. Food and drinks are easily obtained, but talk this over to make sure you get what you want. Bring plenty of water – several liters per day per person. Bring plastic bags to keep things dry in the rain.

One of the reasons for choosing a good guide is that he should be able to arrange all of this for you. You might save a little money doing it yourself, but you will lose time and most people don't come to the Amazon to haggle with river merchants.

Finally, before you go, meet your guide, go out together, get to know his personality, since this is the person you will depend on for survival in the jungle.

Adventures Down the Amazon River

SEJA BEM VINDO!
Guaraná Antarctica
BEM VINDO A MAUÉS

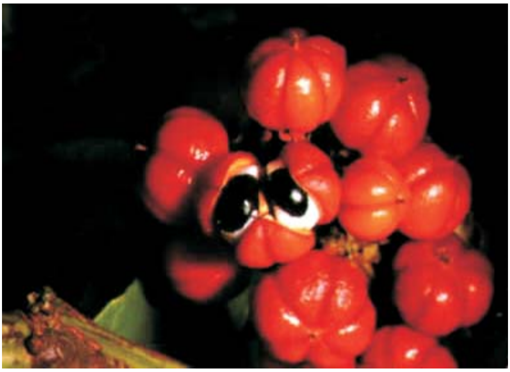
Entrance to the Guaraná airport

Maués: The Land of Guaraná

Maués is a fascinating destination, 166 miles/267 km from Manaus near the Eastern Amazon region. Located on the Maués-Açu River, the town has about 36,000 inhabitants. The region is best known for producing *guaraná*, and every year there is a **Guarana Festival** (normally in November). In April there is the **Festribal**, a festival gathering of indigenous groups.

Maúes has local communities, both indigenous and *caboclo* (rainforest inhabitants), who live in the traditional way a half-hour away by fast boat (your guide can negotiate the transport). In fact, while considered one of the most beautiful cities of Western Amazonia, Maués is one of the only destinations where the focus is more on the local way of life than the natural beauty.

Here you can see how the energetic *guaraná* berry is processed, with ancient indigenous techniques, such as using the raspy tongue of a river fish to grind the powder. Or you might have a chance to purchase prized *Saterê-Maué* artwork from the Urupadi River.


Guaraná berries

Other activities here include visiting waterfalls and river expeditions along the Marau and Maués rivers to some of the exotic river beaches.

If you go downriver to **Oriximiná** on the Trobetas River tributary (in Pará State), you can find a traditional *quilombola* community established by former African slaves. They watch over the area and you must get permission to explore from them. See deep jungle specialist **Gilson Feliciano** in Manaus (famazonrivercharter@yahoo.com.br) for details on how to visit this isolated community.

To get to Maués, regional boats make the trip to and from Manaus once per day for the two-day journey. By fast boat it is seven or eight hours downriver, or if you want to limit the river journey you can take a van from Manaus to Itacoatiara and then take a fast boat, in all about nine hours.

There are also one-hour flights from Manaus on regional airlines **Rico** (☎ 92-542-2109), **Taba** (☎ 92-542-1918), and **Tavaj** (☎ 92-542-1074).

In town you can get information at **Maués City Hall** (☎ 92-533-1163), or in Manaus at **Amazonastur**.

For lodging ($$) here you don't have many options – try **Dorzane Palace Hotel** (☎ 92-542-1954) or **Manués Praia Hotel**, on Rua Waldemar Pedrosa, 594, Downtown (☎ 92-542-1240).

Dancers at the boi-bumbá festival

Parintins Island: Festival in the Forest

Parantins is an island in the Amazon River, with a little city whose great fame is the annual *boi-bumbá* festival that goes on for three days. Tens of thousands of visitors flock here, rivaling even Rio's Carnival in splendor, if not in size.

During the off-season you can visit more cheaply, as many of the hotels and guesthouses will provide a discount. You generally need to make advance arrangements. From here you can rent boats and guides for river journeys to locations such as **Valéria Lake**, in the Parintins Forest on the border with Pará state. During the months of August through February, you can also visit the white sand beaches at **Macurany Lake** or the **Uaicurapá River**, with its dark waters and densely forested riverbanks. The region is filled with *igarapés* for fishing and swimming.

Parintins is 260 miles/420 km down the Amazon River. Regional boats leave daily and take nearly 17 hours to get there (downriver) or 26 hours to get back (upriver). Get tickets and information at the Riverboat Station at Manaus, on Rua Marquês de Santa Cruz. ☎ 92-621-4359. There are also direct regional flights taking an hour and 20 minutes from Manaus, on **Rico** (☎ 92-533-3292) or **Meta** (☎ 92-533-1209), or charter flights arranged though travel agents. Many visitors rent a room from locals on the island, or you can stay more comfortably at a hotel or on the regional boats. Make hotel reservations well in advance for festival time.

For additional information, get in touch with **Fumtur** (☎ 92-633-2850), the **Parintins Tourist Information Service** (☎ 92-533-4400 or 92-533-1805), or **Amazonastur** (☎ 0800-280-8820). On the island is a Tourist Information Center at Rua Jonathas Pedrosa, 249.

Where to Stay ($$-$$$)

Hotel Avenida, Av. Amazonas, 2416 (☎ 92-533-1279); **Hotel Palace**, Rua Agostino Cunha, 2539 (☎ 92-533-2737); **Hotel Samuama**, Rua Senador Alvaro Maia, 174, Downtown (☎ 92-533-2826); **Hotel Torres de Melo**, Rua Paes de Andrade, 356 (☎ 92-533-1779); **Pousada Ilha Bela**, Rua Agostinho Cunha, 2539 (☎ 92-533-2737).

Adventures Up the Rio Negro

Boat to Novo Airão

The Rio Negro is the seventh-largest river on earth, accounting for nearly 11% of the water of the Amazon Basin. It is also the largest non-polluted river of Amazonia.

There are only a few small towns along its 1,023 miles/1,650 km. The water is dark blue because of minerals and vegetation, with an average temperature of about 82.4°F/28°C. The river can be explored by boat from Manaus, visiting two national parks along the way.

Farther upriver, amenities cease to be available and the risk of malaria, hepatitis, and amoebic dysentery grows as you approach Venezuela.

The nearest town to Manaus is **Novo Airão**, about 10 hours upriver. A little farther on is the start of the **Anavilhanas Archipelago**, with its hundreds of islets, sandbars, and islands forming an intriguing maze. Here there are ruins of the abandoned rubber-tapping village of **Airão,** with interesting indigenous cave paintings in the region.

About 18 hours upriver from Manaus is **Jaú Park**, halfway up the Rio Negro from Manaus – this is already wild country and it gets even more so farther on.

The Anavilhanas is the second-largest river archipelago in the world, but if you go upriver past Jaú Park 106 miles/170 km to the mouth of the Rio Branco (25 hours from Manaus), you will find the **Mariuá Archipelago**. This is said to be the world's largest river archipelago, with some 2,500 islands scattered over 55,000 sq miles/140,000 sq km on the Rio Negro. The largest city here is **Barcelos**, 36 hours from Manaus. Travel time to all these destinations can be cut 35% by speedboat, but larger boats are more comfortable for long trips.

From this point you are in the upper Rio Negro, a primitive region about which little is known. Some of the villages here have not changed since the 1800s.

"Easy" travel ends after **São Gabriel de Cachoeiras**, a frontier town with a vocation for ecological tourism five or six days up the river in high waters, more if the river is low. It's a city filled with roughnecks, military, missionaries and the greatest concentration of indigenous peoples anywhere in Brazil, where you are more likely to hear the *hengatu* dialect than Portuguese. The town is the main point of departure for **Pico de Neblina Park**, where you can scale the highest mountain in South America outside the Andes, a cold peak hovering over the steaming malaria forest – very good physical condition is required.

As you might expect, basic services are increasingly limited the farther from Manaus you go. Be careful to observe all travel precautions outlined at the beginning of this book. Pay special attention to what you eat. Experienced guides claim the water of the Rio Negro is fine to drink, but bottled water is recommended. It is a good idea to bring purification tablets. Since the Rio Negro is more acidic (with pH as low as 4.0-4.3), it has fewer mosquitoes, but bring mosquito repellent and loose, long-sleeved clothing anyway. A mosquito net, though bulky, could prove to be your best friend if you are camping. At some points along the river the only place to sleep will be a hammock, which you will need to bring with you.

Anavilhanas Archipelago & Jaú Park

- From Novo Airão travel upriver to the archipelago
- Dark waterways wind like a maze through the forest
- Seldom traveled, so wildlife viewing is great

Jaú Park

The exotic Anavilhanas Archipelago is formed by the joining of several smaller rivers with the Rio Negro, starting around 22 miles/35 km upriver from Manaus. The archipelago continues for another 56 miles/90 km, ending more or less where the Rio Unini feeds into the Rio Negro. Here, amid the *igarapés* and *igapós* is the **Jaú Park**. It has hundreds of beaches with white sand and weird trunk and root formations that are flooded during the rainy season. During any time of year you can see different kinds of primates, rainforest birds and alligators. You are not allowed to set foot in the archipelago itself – sightseeing is all via boat or aircraft, but there are places here for hikes and trails to waterfalls that make a memorable trip. Access can be difficult because the region is remote and does not have many facilities for travelers apart from the basics. While it is possible to arrange a visit with the guides in Manaus, it requires a guide who knows the region well, has contacts locally, and who can navigate the local waterways. If you are especially adventurous, you might consider taking an even longer expedition upriver to the **Mariuá Archipelago**, which is more remote and offers some very good wildlife viewing opportunities. Visiting the region is easiest if you start from **Novo Airão**, a town downriver from the archipelago that can be reached from Manaus.

Novo Airão

Novo Airão is the closest town to Jaú Park and the archipelago, with about 7,000 inhabitants plus a few thousand more *caboclos* (rainforest inhabitants) scattered nearby. The town is far from luxurious and you should expect only the most basic facilities.

There is a **post office** though (on Avenida Presidente Getúlio Vargas) and a **hospital** (on Avenida Tiburcino, ☎ 92-365-1514), plus some reasonably acceptable places to stay and restaurants serving regional fish. It is also the last easy place to obtain supplies such as bottled water if you plan on heading up the river even farther (such as to the remote **Mariuá Archipelago**).

The nicest part of town to look around is near the port – this is where the wealthy rubber merchants used to live during the boom. The rest of the town is run-down, with some brick and tin-roofed dwellings and rickety looking wooden homes on stilts where amenities such as bathrooms, when they exist, are little more than a hole in the floor.

The local residents, known as *caboclos* (or mixed indigenous-Europeans), subsist by fishing and selling handicrafts. There are not many English-speakers in the town so a guide is needed, but the residents are incredible river navigators and can be hired here.

How to Get Here

Novo Airão can be reached overland by the Manaus-Manacapuru Highway. The road is partially paved and was in ruins until recently (and is still commonly marked as such on older maps). Today, however, the passage overland is not bad and is a convenient way to get here.

Rent a car in Manaus and take a ferry over the river to Manacapuru. From there, you will have to drive about four hours. The ferry is free for pedestrians. There are also two buses in each direction every day to and from Manaus. It is 60 miles/100 km to Manacapuru, then take the Manacapuru/Novo Airão road. You then drive another 60 miles/100 km, 24 miles/40 km of which is paved, with the rest in poor condition, but the road does not tend to wash out even in the rains.

Another option are the regional boats that leave from Manaus to Barcelos twice a week. These boats, called *ônibus d'água* or "water bus," are used mainly by locals who stop at the river communities along the way upriver. It's a cheap way to go and gives you a chance to see the surrounding jungle, but it will take about 10 hours to Novo Airão. By fast boat you can get there in three hours, but this will be a lot more expensive. If you are traveling in a group, then dividing the gasoline (about $200 one way) plus pilot's fee and provisions, makes it more economical.

Some travel agencies can arrange these trips, or you can hire an independent guide to haggle for you directly with the pilots at the port. Make sure they are familiar with the archipelago because it is not yet a very common destination.

Getting Around

The main transport is the canoe (motorized or paddled) or an aluminum *bote* that, when motorized, is called a "flyer" or *voadeira*. This is how you access the most interesting sights in the region but ask your pilot to shut off the motor in some areas to avoid spooking the wildlife. Canoes are the only way through many of the local waterways.

The busy area in town is the port where the boats coming from Manaus dock. In the town there are no cabs or bus service but *moto-taxis* (motorcycles) are available if you need them.

A recommended **local guide** is Marta Vallotton, a well-traveled person, who has lived in North America, Africa and Europe, and speaks English and French. She has worked with foreign travelers for over 15 years and is the former Secretary of Tourism for Novo Airão. She and her husband Jean-Daniel Vallotton, from Switzerland, can provide assistance, canoe rides, visits to the Anavilhanas archipelago and Jaú National Park, jungle trekking, kayaking, motorboats for overnight trips, and even authentic indigenous dugouts powered by 15 hp motors. They provide life jackets, mosquito nets, hammocks and tents. Their e-mail is fam@uol.com.br or call ☎ 92-365-1000.

The **Fundação Vitória Amazônica** (www.fva.org.br) also has a lot of information in Portuguese about the region.

CABOCLOS: THE DWELLERS OF THE AMAZON

Caboclo woman & child

In Brazil the term *caboclo* means anyone of mixed indigenous and European blood, but typically it refers to rural people from the North. In the Amazon, it means the inhabitants of the rainforest who eke out an existence from limited resources. They live in the scattered villages and settlements left behind from the rubber boom, typically in a small groups of houses and a few common buildings, getting by with subsistence agriculture. They depend on the forest for their survival, and deal with constant changes in weather and water levels, braving the hazards of the jungle and surviving through generations of wisdom handed down through the families. While public health officials attempt to control malaria, yellow fever and and HIV, isolated communities still suffer from these diseases. Without refrigeration, men typically hunt or fish each day while women and children prepare manioc flour using centuries-old pressing techniques. Washing and bathing is done on the riverbank or in the *igarapés*. With more tourists coming to the Amazon region in recent years, there has been an increase in production of local art similar to that made by indigenous groups – you can tell which is *caboclo* by the dyed feathers.

Jaú Park

Jaú Park is up the Rio Negro 137 miles/220 km from Manaus. From August to April, the river is usually too low to allow larger riverboats through. To visit, you must get a permit at the **Ibama** office in Manaus. You can do this through guides and travel agencies or more cheaply direct from Ibama at Rua Ministro João Gonçalves de Souza (no number), at the first km marker on BR-319 in Manaus.

Aerial view of Jaú Park

The best time to visit is in June and July, when the rivers are full and the maze-like effect at the Anavilhanas Archipelago is at its best. From September to November the water level recedes and white sand beaches form along the banks.

It is thought that indigenous groups occupied this region at least 1,000 years ago, due to the presence of carvings and cave paintings around Jaú. Early in the Colonial period, missionaries found some villages downriver of the Anavilhanas Archipelago and started an outpost. Toward the end of the 19th century, during the rubber boom, the tiny village of Airão (now in ruins, not to be confused with Novo Airão) grew into a reasonably prosperous town. It was abandoned when Brazil's rubber monopoly collapsed and the *caboclos* moved downriver.

The terrain here is generally flat, with low highland areas separated by dark waterways rich with tannic acids. The climate is humid and hot, 79-81°F/26-27°C on average. Ibama researchers have found 400 species of plants in the park. The dry areas are filled with dense rainforest and exotic trees, their great sprawling roots needed to support their towering height.

There is a lot of wildlife to see here, including caimans, and the famed *jaú* catfish, the largest in the world, which can grow as big as a person

Sloth

(see *Sport Fishing*, page 438). Less common (especially if you come roaring up in a motorboat), are manatees, otters and even jaguars. It is also possible to see deer and monkeys that are found only in this region, as well as countless varieties of birds in the rainforest canopy such as toucans, macaws, and curacaos.

In the river communities near the park, expect only the most limited facilities, but don't let that stop you from coming. This rarely traveled part of the Amazon is so important that UNESCO has declared it a Heritage of Humanity site.

There is a **Visitors Center** in the park but it has no English speakers and very little information. They should be contacted ahead of time to let them know you are coming. ☎ 92-613-3277 or 92-237-5177.

Adventures on Land

Just downriver of the park's border, the **Ruins of Airão** (sometimes called Airão Velho) filled with tangled vegetation can be visited by taking a 15-minute *voadeira* ride from the park offices. Ibama officials are supposed to lead tourists through the park, so make sure you stop at the visitors center. During the boom there were 40 houses, now abandoned. Nearby are cave paintings.

The **Igarapé Preto Waterfall** is a short walk up the Rio Jaú from the park's entrance, where the Igarapé Preto stream meets the Rio Jaú, but only from October through January. **The Jaú Falls** takes about five hours to hike along the Rio Jaú, with a series of white-water cascades. Or take a *voadeira* about a half-hour from the Park offices. To hike to the falls, take the stream to the right, continuing along Rio Jaú, at the junction of the Rio Carabinani (a little ways up the Rio Jaú, after the Igarapé Falls). If you take the river to the left in the dry season, it will take you to the **Rio Carabinani Falls**, about an hour or so from the Park offices where you can swim.

Adventures on Water

One of the most exciting things to do in the park is to go out in a *voadeira* to experience the sights and sounds of this remote section of the jungle. Remember that turning off the motor of the canoe will greatly enhance the experience.

There are several rivers that can be navigated, including the Jaú, the Carabinani, and the Unini (that forms the outer limit of the park upriver from the park offices). They offer good wildlife and nature viewing, with beautiful orchids.

Novo Airão dolphin

One of the nicest things to do near Novo Airão is swimming with the river dolphins, called *botos*, and this can be arranged with most travel agencies or independent guides in Manaus.

Where To Stay

As yet there are no fine hotels here, but the **Hilton Amazon Eco Lodge** (www.hilton.com/worldwideresorts) was being built at the time of writing. For now there is only very basic lodging and only cash is accepted.

Hotel Josely ($), on Avenida João Paulo II, 21, has TV, air-conditioning and parking, with breakfast included. ☎ 92-365-1157.

Hotel Rio Negro ($), on Rua Castelo Branco, 47, has air-conditioning, ceiling fans, TV and parking, with breakfast included. ☎ 92-365-1102.

You can also stay at a few cheap *pousadas* run by local families, which may be nothing more than a place to hang your hammock – check it out before you decide to stay there.

Pousada Amajaú ($), on João Tiburtino da Silva, 28, has TVs and fans. Breakfast not included. ☎ 92-365-1507.

Pousada Ecológica Anavilhanas ($) has TV, breakfast not included, on Highway AM 010, at Km 8 marker. ☎ 92-365-1147.

Pousada Bela Vista ($), on Avenida Getúlio Vargas (no number), has air-conditioned rooms and TV. The owner, Dona Laura, speaks German. ☎ 92-365-1023.

Where to Eat

In Novo Airão, **Restaurante Carioca** ($$) is modest but the best in town. Near City Hall (*Prefeitura*) downtown, it serves tasty regional fish.

What to Buy

The **Fundação Almerinda Malaquias** (FAM) is a group of artisans who make and sell handicrafts made from driftwood and vegetable fibers. The weaves are intricate, with special pigments from tree bark. Fibers are extracted over a period of days on each harvesting trip from the roots or leaves of plants, with locations carefully rotated to avoid an impact on the ecosystems. The group is supported by the Swiss government and philanthropists, using composites of wood residue recovered from the old shipyards and sawmills to avoid hardwood deforestation. The workshop is at Avenida Tiradentes, 121, in Novo Airão. ☎ 92-365-1312 or 92-365-1000.

Side-Trip
The Mariuá Archipelago

The Mariuá Archipelago

If you continue upriver from the Jaú Park region by boat another 102 miles/170 km (about a day's journey by slow boat), you will reach the Mariuá Archipelago. Similar to the Anavilhanas, with a maze of dark waterways through the jungle, it is far enough from civilization so that you could easily spend a week or more here without seeing another boat. As with the rest of the region, during the dry season from September to March, white sand beaches appear and offer good wildlife viewing opportunities, including dolphins, birds, and butterflies. It is also possible to go sport fishing here in certain sections designated for sustainable use (see *Manaus*, above, page 438). The closest town is **Barcelos**, which can be reached by regional boat from Manaus. Travel to this region requires special preparations. Check with the guides listed in this chapter to make custom arrangements.

Pico de Neblina

- Climb Brazil's tallest mountain near the border with Venezuela
- Visit the roughneck town of São Gabriel da Cachoeira
- More indigenous groups are here than anywhere in Brazil

Pico de Neblina

For intense adventure in the Amazon there is Pico de Neblina National Park. This 6. 2-million-acre/2.2-million-hectare wildlife preserve in the upper Rio Negro is on the border with Venezuela just a few miles from the equator. One of the largest wildlife refuges anywhere in the world, Pico de Neblina Park is a remote and wild region with dense jungle. Among the options here is scaling Brazil's tallest peak, **Pico de Neblina**. The region was first explored by European missionaries in the 1600s, and Portugal built a fortress here in 1759 to defend against invasion from Colombia and Venezuela. Until the 1960s the border was not clearly defined, but at that time Brazil claimed the mountain was in its territory. Gold was discovered here in the 1970s along the border zone, stirring up more controversy. At the time, Brazil's military dictatorship set up strongholds in the so-called Northern Corridor, which today is still a region of military concern due to incursions by rebels and drug traders from Colombia. It is also a region with the highest number of indigenous groups anywhere in Brazil. Reservations were set aside for the Yanomanis in the 1990s, and the only non-indigenous settlement in the park is a Salesian mission in the village of Maturará. In all there are 22 indigenous groups living here and there are believed to be some more tribes that have never had contact with the outside world. It is a very humid region with cloud cover year-round and daily downpours from April through May. During the dry season, you can travel overland in the park, but in the rainy season you must take a boat. The nearest town is **São Gabriel de Cachoeira**, a wild and woolly frontier town filled with military, drug traders and indigenous peoples, where the most common language is Hengatu.

Tips for Enjoying the Park

The park has three distinct zones. The alluvial plains are the lowest areas around the Branco and Negro rivers at up to about 525 feet/160m above sea level. There is a plateau called Amazonas-Orinoco, named for the rivers that run below it, with several mountain ranges and peaks up to 6,560 feet/2,000 m. At the Roraima sedimentary plateau, there are peaks ranging from 3,936 feet/1,200 m and up, with the tallest being the mist-enshrouded **Pico de Neblina**, 9,885 feet/3,014 m above sea level. This is a dream climb for experienced hikers willing to face the hostile conditions. While the climb itself is not so difficult, there are extremes of temperature and of the environment to contend with. The best time to visit is during the dry season from September to January, but this happens to be when it is hottest and filled with clouds of mosquitoes. It is possible to contract malaria here, so special precautions such as using mosquito repellent and long-sleeve shirts are required. There is some rare wildlife in the park, including jaguars and anteaters, as well as exotic birds of pray, such as the endangered harpy eagle. More common are tapirs, howling monkeys, and armadillos. The Yanomani indigenous lands encompass the park, plus other indigenous groups but, apart from some military bases, the region is very sparsely inhabited. All visits must be authorized at the Park headquarters and visitors need to be accompanied by guides, generally by the members of the jungle warfare battalion who are familiar with the region. Due to the bureaucracy, make plans well in advance. Also, vaccinations are recommended per your doctor's advice.

São Gabriel de Cachoeira

São Gabriel de Cachoeira

São Gabriel de Cachoeira does not receive too many foreign tourists. As this region is in the so-called Northern Corridor national security zone, with a hard-to-protect border, it has a reputation as a route for the international drug trade. In practice, the drug trade is underground and the bigger problem you will face is the lack of basic infrastructure. The military may search you on entering and leaving. To avoid hassles, observe the cautions described in this chapter about items made from endangered animals and don't even think about carrying drugs. The region has a total of about 45,000 people, with some 35,000 being indigenous groups. The indigenous culture is one of the most striking characteristics of the city, with hundreds of indigenous villages nearby. The economy, now that the mining boom is over, is based mostly on ranching and agriculture, fishing and a small amount of rubber and lumber extraction. For all its roughness, this is among the most scenic locations in Amazonia. The remote park and the rainforest region is filled with islands, waterfalls, and the white sand beaches along the Rio Negro. The main festival in the city is **Saint Gabriel's Day**, September 20-29. For information contact City Hall, but don't expect English to be spoken (☎ 92-471-1120 or 92-471-1188). The **airport** is at Estrada do Aeroporto, at the 18 Km marker (☎ 92-471-1343) and from there you can take a taxi into town. In an emergency, there is a **hospital** at Rua Quintino de Sá Cardoso, 1126 (☎ 92-471-1437 or 92-471-1126).

Near São Gabriel de Cachoeira

How to Get Here

São Gabriel de Cachoeira is about two hours by plane from Manaus, or you can take a five- to six-day boat trip (or longer, depending on the season) – inquire at the port of get suggestions from **Amazonastur**. Once in São Gabriel, to visit the park you will have to fill out some paperwork and make arrangements at the park headquarters, Avenida Dom José, 52 (☎ 92-613-3277), which may take a while.

Where to Stay & Eat

São Gabriel de Cachoeira is not a comfortable city. Expect only rudimentary services and decent river meals – fish is a tasty option, though. The best choice for lodging is **King's Island Lodge**, on Ilha dos Reis, five or 10 minutes by fast boat from the city. www.naturesafaris.com, ☎ 92-471-1215. You can also take your chances at the **Hotel Roraima** on Avenida Castelo Branco, 361, with TV, air-conditioning and mini-bar. ☎ 92-471-1576. To eat, **La Cave du Conde** on Rua Brigadeiro Eduardo Gomes is reasonably good, or try the regional fish at the **Íris**, on Avenida Sete de Setembro, 477. ☎ 92-471-1288.

Travel Services

These services can be indispensible for helping to plan your trip and ensure your well-being. As this region is so far from Manaus, most of the guides listed in that chapter will not be able to provide much help, though you might ask around.

Agência Turismo e Aventura is at Avenida 7 de Setembro (no number) in downtown São Gabriel (branco@poranganet.com.br). **Nature Safaris** (which operates the King's Island Lodge) can be reached via www.naturesafaris.com or ☎ 92-471-1215.

Adventures in Pico de Neblina Park

Scaling Pico de Neblina does not require special skills beyond experience in hiking, very good physical condition and resistance to a drastic change in temperature from the steamy jungle to the cold at the summit.

You will require special guide services (normally from the military) and the trip takes about 10 days, once you arrive at São Gabriel de Cachoeira – so count on at least 12 days, including travel to and from the city by plane.

It's a two-day hike through the jungle to the base of the mountain. Here you can relax a bit, swim and enjoy the native wildlife. The 19-mile/32-km trek to the peak then takes four days. The peak is nearly always shrouded in mist. The trails are muddy and difficult, with tangled roots, especially when it rains, which is nearly all the time. Higher up, you may have to hack your way through with a machete, but it is not so muddy. Then you finally reach some rocky areas through the cold mist.

The descent to the base camp takes two days, then two more of hiking and river travel back to the city. Along the way you will have the chance to see one of the most beautiful sections of Amazonia. Bring a camera (preferably waterproof).

Pico de 31 de Março

You may opt instead to hike **Pico de 31 de Março**. This is Brazil's second-tallest peak at 9,813 feet/2,992 m above sea level.

Package trips are the best way to go because they include a guide, porters, boat navegators, all meals and a cook, plus lodging for one or two days in the city. Make sure you arrange details ahead of time, especially given the language barrier.

You need a permit from **Ibama** and a permit from the **Indigenous Association of the Cauaburis River** (AIRCA), both payable at the park offices.

For a package trip you could expect to pay at least $1,250 for one person, with discounts for groups, not counting air fare to São Gabriel de Cachoeira.

Morro dos Seis Lagos: This is another challenging trek available in the region that takes about five days, including three days of trekking and crossing over the equator. Seis Lagos Reserve is a wildlife refuge and indigenous area in the park, with six lakes north of São Gabriel de Cachoeira, that can be reached in two days by *voadeira* (motorized canoe). The lakes have different colors because of the minerals in the water, turning them green, brown, black or blue. You have to climb Morro dos Seis Lagos – this is a steep hike through a jungle trail at a 30 degree angle! You will stop at indigenous villages and see the lakes before returning to the city.

Again, all arrangements should be made as far as possible in advance, including authorization from Ibama and approval to visit the indigenous areas. Check with the local travel agencies or Amazonastur for more information.

Side-Trips

Travel beyond São Gabriel de Cachoeira gets more difficult along the Rio Negro, and you do so at your own risk. It is possible when the rivers are full to head north on the Rio Negro for a day and half to **Cucui**, a town on the Venezuelan border. Cucui has boat tours and a trail to **Cucui Rock**, which can be reached only from Venezuela. If you are interested, you should contact the travel services listed here to make the necessary arrangements for crossing the border.

From São Gabriel in theory you can also make it to the **Araripirá Falls** up the **Rio Uapés** and to a border town called **Iaurete**. From there it is another day or so along the border upriver to the Colombian town of **Mitu**. Unless you want to get shot at by coca traffickers, though (or by Brazilian military who might mistake you as one), the Uapés route is strongly discouraged.

Adventures Up the Rio Solimões

Flowers in the Rio Solimões

Traveling up the Rio Solimões is another river journey you can take from Manaus. Covered entirely with rainforest, this part of the Amazon River basin includes the Solimões, Içа, and Japurá rivers and connected waterways such as the Hapapóris, Traíra, Puretê and Cunha. The waterways are muddier and lack the tannic acid of the Rio Negro so there are a lot more mosquitoes to contend with along the way. The advantage, however, is that there is more wildlife to see, especially alligators, and there are some of the most intriguing ecological tourism destinations in Brazil here, such as the **Mamirauá Reserve** to the west of Manaus. The Rio Solimões is navigable all the way to the triple border with Peru and Colombia, which is a long journey – 883 miles/1,420 km from Manaus. Conditions are precarious upriver and can even be dangerous close to the border due to the black market trade in drugs, wildlife and timber. For this reason it is not recommended to travel past the town of **Tefé**, which is the entry way to the Mamirauá. Closer to Manaus there is Mamori & Juma, a very interesting state park region with wildlife viewing and fishing opportunities where you can also have contact with the local river communities for a glimpse of the traditional way of life.

Mamori e Juma State Park

- See unspoiled and seldom traveled rainforest
- Terrific wildlife viewing opportunities
- Stay at river communities with a traditional lifestyle

Up the Rio Solimões, just past the junction with the Rio Negro, you will get to the port town of Careiro. From Careiro, you have to take a van overland to the Rio Araça and travel upriver 26 miles/42 km, until you reach Mamori e Juma State Park. The trip on the Rio Araça requires that you make special arrangements to hire a boat and a guide, as the regional boats can't make it the journey. Despite these added preparations, the trip is worth it because here you can get a taste of the unspoiled jungle off the beaten track. You probably will not see another tourist for the entire trip.

Adventures in the Park

The region has more than one million caimans, and the river trip up offers tremendous wildlife viewing opportunities known to few. Along the way you pass waterways filled with the giant Amazonia water lilies called *vitória regia*. There are thousands of birds here – parrots, macaws, cranes, toucans, hawks and eagles, with amphibians of all colors and varieties. On the riverbanks you can spot giant snakes such as anacondas, and countless varieties of colorful butterflies. Here you may also get a chance to meet the *botos*, the Amazon river dolphins, in an unspoiled habitat. In October and November, you can fish for peacock bass in a region normally only fished by the *caboclos*. Some weigh over 20 pounds. There are no lodges here, just pure wildlife with travel in small individual boats.

Where to Stay & Eat

Because there is still practically no infrastructure for travelers in this region, travel here requires that you eat and sleep either in *caboclo* homes or in hammocks at a camp along the riverbank. This is commonly done in remote areas of the jungle and, while you cannot expect the same level of comfort as a hotel, it's a good way to experience what the real Amazonian culture and way of life is all about.

It is a good idea to set aside at least five days to really experience the best of the region. Make sure you bring mosquito repellent and a mosquito net for comfort, but this is not an area where malaria or yellow is common. Because this trip is off the beaten path, a knowledgeable guide is fundamental for arranging lodging and other logistics, but travel here does not require the intense forward planning or skills of a deep jungle trek. A recommended guide who really knows the area is English-speaking **Luis Sergio da Lima**. Contact him at deepjungle@cklick21.com.br or ☎ 92-9115-3910.

The Mamirauá Reserve

- Model rainforest preservation project
- Virtually untouched by human habitation
- Stay in a comfortable eco-lodge

Channel 1 (617)354-2505
White uakari, Brazil
G. Bond

The white uakari monkey is endemic to the Reserve

The Mamirauá Sustainable Development Reserve is a model Brazilian rainforest preservation project between the **Rio Solimões** and **Rio Japurá** – about halfway from Manaus to the triple border. It is the largest *várzea* or rainforest floodplain in the world, and virtually untouched by human habitation. There is a well-run ecological tourism program here, which helps sustain the local population, along with eco-friendly timber and fishing activities. The government's **Mamirauá Institute** (☎ 97-343-4160) runs the park and its comfortable **Uakari Lodge**. Proceeds from tourism are invested in community projects, environmental protection efforts, and educational programs in the region. During the peak of the dry season (around October) access to the Reserve is more difficult. The speedboats sometimes get stuck and visitors need to get off to free them. It is also the hottest time of the year (average temperatures can soar in excess of 90°F). Access to the wildlife refuge is via the town of **Tefé**, with about 50,000 people, and the largest community between Manaus on the border on Rio Solimões**(Rephrase last eight words. Makes no sense). Keep in mind that, while well-run, this project is in the middle of the jungle, and if you are bothered by rain and mosquitoes, or are expecting five-star lodging, you are probably better off at one of the jungle lodges in Manaus.

How to Get Here

There is not much to do or see in Tefé so don't waste time there. You can also fly from Manaus in a little over an hour via **Rico Airlines** or **Varig** (each about $175 round-trip). From Tefé, it is another hour and a half in a motorized canoe to the Reserve. There are regional boats to and from Manaus and Tefé almost every day and the trip takes about 48 hours. A fast boat (*barco de jato*) takes 12 hours and costs about $25 per person, going back and forth twice per week. As transport schedules and prices are subject to change, get in touch ahead of time with the Mamirauá Institute by e-mail at ecoturismo@mamiraua.org.br. They are really the ones developing the travel opportunities here and have the most information.

Adventures in The Mamirauá Reserve

Two-toed sloth in the Reserve

The main reason to come here is to see rare primates such as the scarlet-faced white *uakari* monkey, insects, reptiles, amphibians and flora, and to learn about the rainforest.

Things are done in small groups (no solo activities) with local guides and bilingual naturalists who explain the incredibly complex ecological interactions. You will take canoe trips along lakes and canals or hike through the rainforest trails, which are not very strenuous – typically about two hours or so on flat terrain. There are educational presentations at the lodge on the ecosystems and wildlife you will encounter.

You will also have the opportunity to visit local river communities here and can see what daily life is like in the Amazon or purchase local handicrafts.

A few precautions are in order – swimming in the region is discouraged due the presence of piranhas, alligators and snakes. Likewise there are scorpions, fire ants, and spiders and in the vegetation that are practically invisible, so be careful what you touch. Observe all the other travel tips for the Amazon in this chapter.

When to Go

You can go any time of year, but the wildlife depends on the seasons (water levels change 40 feet from season to season!). During the dry season from September to March, with the low river levels, you can observe fish and predators that feed on them such as the giant *jacaré-açu* black caiman, river dolphins, and aquatic birds that migrate to the region. During this season, there are more trails to explore. During the wet season from April to August, sightseeing is mostly by canoe where you will get a close look at the rainforest canopy, sloths and orchids. During any time of year you will also run across red howler monkeys and eight other types of primates.

Where to Stay

Lodging is at the **Uakari Lodge** ($$$-$$$$). Staff will pick you up at the Tefé airport as soon as you arrive. There are 10 simple but comfortable rooms with individual bathrooms and terraces, complete with solar-power, hot showers and a sewage filtration system for low impact on the environment. There is a central floating house with a restaurant serving regional cuisine (including lots of exotic tropical fruits), plus a video room, library, conference room and deck.

Eastern Amazônia

Pará

The state of Pará is one of the most intriguing destinations in Brazil. Located at the eastern fringe of Amazonia, on the equator and along the Atlantic coast, one sixth of Brazil is in this state and one quarter of the Amazon. Pará is different from anywhere else in Brazil, even from the Western Amazon. For more than 150 years it was for all intents and purposes its own country, called Grão Pará. The region was first explored by Europeans in 1500 when Spanish explorer Vicente Yáñez Pinzón found the Amazon River and its thriving indigenous population. Colonization only got underway a hundred years later, in 1615, when the Portuguese, fearing European rivals, established a fort in modern-day Belém to guard the entrance to the mysterious Amazon under a brutal Colonial administration.

Travel outside the capital city of **Belém** is limited to a few main areas because of problems with infrastructure and the availability of services. One of the things that makes Pará such a great place to travel is the culture, with exotic local cuisine and great indigenous arts. It also has patches of unspoiled rainforest that can be explored similar to those in the western part of the Amazon. Chaotic and congenial Belém grew into a metropolis during the rubber boom, and has many reminders of its mercantile past, such as the Ver-O-Peso market. Nearby, the **Isle of Marajó** is famous for its scenery and ceramics, while **Santarém** up the Amazon river is dotted with rustic villages. From here, deep jungle adventures are possible up the Rio Tapajós, where you can sleep in traditional villages and trek to seldom-visited destinations. This is one of the rainiest regions in the world, with dozens of important rivers, including the eastern portion of the Amazon, the Tapajós, the Xingu, the Toncantins, and the Trombetas. These are literally the highways of the jungle and can be explored for days on end. The state has two separate time zones, divided by the Rio Xingu. To the east it is Brasilia time, and to the west one hour behind.

Belém

- Unique history, culture and cuisine
- Gateway to Amazon River expeditions
- An excellent place to shop for local artworks

Belém is one of the most important cities in the north of Brazil, with one and half million people. On the equator, it has a unique local culture with fascinating destinations close by. As the Atlantic Ocean port on the Amazon River, it is the gateway for expeditions up the river. The city is a mix of grubby and grandiose, and the most charming section is the historic Centro with its shady parks, Colonial architecture and mango trees (which the city is famous for). After building a fortress, the Portuguese used Belém to explore the Amazon, sending adventurer Pedro Texeira on a harrowing two-year trek to modern-day Quito in Ecuador and back in 1637. He found the river was dotted with indigenous communities and the Jesuits soon began building missions up the river. As it was close to Europe, Belém thrived with the slave trade and the production of spices, hides, and other New World goods. Colonization was particularly violent here, with constant warfare between the colonizers and the natives. In 1835, there was a bloody civil war known as the Cabanagem Rebellion, when an indigenous, *caboclo*, black and mulatto army wrested the city from European control, but federal troops soon took power again.

Mercado Ver-o-Peso

The rubber boom brought peace and it was then that the city began to grow, earning the title, "Paris of the Tropics." As a center of trade for vanilla, cacao, cinnamon, and other goods, the city has an amazing marketplace called the **Mercado Ver-o-Peso** that is not to be missed. There are also plenty of interesting old Colonial buildings to see, while nearby there are over 50 islands with beaches, many deserted, which can be explored on day-trips. Belém is rainy, chaotic and not always very safe, but it is an enchanting location with the tropical rhythms of *Carimbó* music, friendly locals, and the wafting scent of *patchouli* **?on the streets. One of the best reasons to go to Belém is to enjoy the local cuisine, which is an exotic mix of European and indigenous styles found nowhere else in Brazil.

How to Get Here

By plane there are daily flights from many major cities in Brazil. Belém can also be reached by highway from Brasília and cities of the Northeast, along Federal Highway BR 316 and State Highway PA 391 (Augusto Meira). By boat you can get to Belém from the coast of Brazil or from Manaus in the Western Amazon. Buses run to and from São Luís, Fortaleza, Recife, Salvador, Palmas, Brasília, Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo, and to the areas listed in *Side-Trips.* They leave from the Bus Station on Praça do Operário (☎ 91-246-7442).

Getting Around

Belém is a large and fairly modern city with decent infrastructure, except for the roads, which constantly flood during the rainy season.

A common cab from the airport costs about $10 but, as elsewhere in Brazil, there are local transport cartels that double the price for people arriving at the airport. If you want to save money you can take a bus that runs along Avenida Presidente Vargas, which is the central thoroughfare in Belém, but this is not recommended if you have bags.

The urban bus terminal (☎ 91-228-0500) is on Avenida Almirante Barroso, a little over a mile from the historic Centro district. Bus schedules are available from tourist board offices (see *For More Information*). Rental cars are available from **Localiza** (☎ 0800-992-000), **Unidas** (800-121-121), and **Hertz** (☎ 0800-701-7300), but driving can be a little hectic here.

You can get cash in the airport at the ATMs – **HSBC**, **Banco do Brasil** and **Bradesco** all operate there for Cirrus, Plus, and credit card withdrawals. There is also an **HSBC** branch with ATMs at Avenida Presidente Vargas, 670. **Banco do Brasil** has an exchange desk at Rua Santo Antônio, 432, open from 10 am-3 pm Monday through Friday.

It rains almost every afternoon in Belém, especially from November through May.

Staying Safe

Street crime can be a problem in Belém, and tourists can be targeted. The most common crimes in Belém are snatch-and-runs, but armed robbery happens too. Take extra precautions around the Ver-o-Peso Market. Typically in Belém, an assailant will follow you, waiting for a chance, or call out to you on a deserted street to get you to stop – if that happens duck into the nearest commercial establishment to get help and try to keep enough distance to get away. Tennis shoes are better than sandals for a quick getaway, despite the heat. Use taxis instead of buses, especially at night and if you are carrying bags or valuables. Tourists stand out here. Don't flash wads of cash, don't wear expensive jewelry you just bought at the local stores, and don't wander around alone and drunk, as these are the typical profiles of a victim here. In theory, this is a yellow fever zone, so vaccination is advised, but cases are extremely rare.

As with other major cities in Brazil, some of the tourist zones, such as **Praça de República**, are crowded with prostitutes. This is a legal activity and male travelers may be approached. Women by themselves may experience annoying catcalls anywhere in the city, and the best thing to do is ignore them or go somewhere else.

For More Information

There are **Belémtur** tourist board offices at the bus station and the airport (☎ 91-211-6151) and at Avenida Governador José Malcher, 592 (☎ 91-242-0033). Or check the Internet at www.belemtur.com.br. The **Paratur** state tourist board offices are at Praça Kennedy (no number), ☎ 91-212-9135 or 91-212-0575. Detailed city maps are available at newsstands (try the ones around Avenida Presidente Vargas) for a few dollars. The travel agency **Santarémtur** also has a helpful English language site at www.santaremtur.com.br.

Festivals & Events

The **Festival of Círio de Nazaré** on the second Sunday of October is one of the most famous Roman Catholic celebrations in Brazil. Upwards of a million and a half people participate every year. Nautical processions feature boats decorated with colorful lights and streamers, while the faithful lug heavy crosses or wooden models of boats for miles through the stifling heat, sometimes barefoot or even on their knees, in a demonstration of devotion to Our Lady of Nazareth (in Portuguese, *Nossa Senhora de Nazaré*). It began in 1793 when the saint's image appeared, according to legend, at the site where today stands the **Basilica of Nazaré**. Taken home by a *caboclo*, a local peasant, the image returned by itself to the spot where it was found. Several times it was removed and returned miraculously to the spot. The faithful believe it comes from Galilee, having been carried over from Portugal, where it worked many miracles, and was eventually lost in Brazil before its remarkable reappearance. On the Saturday before the big day, the image is transported back by boat from the neighboring town of

Icoaraci (*see Side-Trips*) to the Cathedral and then walked over to the Basilica amid a sea of worshipers. All around the city there are fireworks and singing of hymns. Families commemorate with a traditional lunch together, most commonly serving the most famous dish in Pará – duck in fermented manioc sauce (*pato no tucupi*). The celebrations continue for two weeks.

Note: the festival tends to fill up hotel rooms and makes it impossible to see the historic churches.

Tour Agencies & Guides

The licensed tour guides listed below have half-day and full-day city tours and customized adventures. They all charge about the same prices but there are usually some variations. It pays to look around to find who you like best. They can also arrange boat trips to other destinations, or air-taxis. Most have Internet sites as well where you can obtain more information.

Amazon Star Turismo Ltda, Rua Henrique Gurjão, 236, in Reduto (☎ 91-212-6244)

Raio de Sol Viagens e Turismo, Rua Veiga Cabral,1023, in Batista Campos (☎ 91-223-9769)

Augetur Viagens e Turismo, Avenida Alcindo Cacela, 1264, at the Empire Center in Nazaré (☎ 91 272-212)

Lusotur Viagens e Turismo, Avenida Brás de Aguiar, 471 (☎ 91-222-9344)

Travel In Turismo, Generalíssimo Deodoro, 348A, travelin@nautilus.com.br

Planeta Amazônia Viagens e Turismo, Avenida Governador José Malcher, 815, room 209 (☎ 91-242-2219)

196 Viagens e Turismo

Sightseeing

Belém is great for sightseeing. Although it rains a lot, the parks, historic sites and cultural centers are very rewarding.

Historic Sites

★★★**Mercado Ver-o-Peso** means "see the weight market," and you should not miss it. Dating from 1688, the name comes from the cries of the tax collectors as merchants weighed in their goods. Originally a slave market, it soon became the main center of trade for goods from the jungle. Today there are thousands of stalls with amazing sights, sounds and smells. Nothing here is staged for tourists – it is one of the most authentic and interesting sites in Belém. Be careful as you look around, though: snatch and run theft is fairly common, and robberies in the surrounding area are not unheard of. The nearby **Estação de Docas** is safe and has good restaurants for lunch afterwards.

Inside the Theater of Peace

★★The grand old **Theater of Peace** (Teatro de Paz) was built 1878 during the rubber boom, with the best of European materials and artisans. In its day, it hosted some of the finest opera performances in the New World. Every August there is an opera festival, with classical music concerts throughout the year. At Avenida da Paz (no number) on the Praça da República. Open Tuesday through Saturday 9 am-5 pm. ☎ 91-224-7355.

★The **Ruins of the Murutucu Mill** (Engenho do Murutucu) are a demolished sugar mill dating from 1780. In addition to the mill, nearby are the ruins of a chapel from 1711, and the big house where the owner lived. It's on the Avenida Permetral, 211, three miles/five km from the Centro. You should take a cab. Get a ticket from the **Embrapa** federal crop research station at the site. Open 8 am-12 am and 2-5 pm Monday through Friday. ☎ 91-276-6333.

Parks

★★The **Emílio Goeldi Park and Museum** (Museu Emílio Goeldi) is a zoo with thousands of Amazonian plants and animals. There is an indigenous culture exhibit with authentic *marajoara* and *tapajonica* ceramics. It is near the Nazaré Basilica at Avenida Magalhães Barata, 376. Open Tuesday through Thursday 9 am-12 am, and 2-5 pm, Friday 9-12 am, and on weekends 9 am-5 pm. ☎ 91-249-1233.

★A new park opened in recent years called the **Mangal das Garças**, landscaped to look like a native forest, with plants and wildlife, including an interesting butterfly house. Buy the *passaporte* (around $2) to see everything. It is outside the city on Passagem Carneiro Rocha – take a cab.

Rodrigues Alves Park (Bosque Rodrigues Alves), downtown, is a section of the native Amazon rainforest with lakes, pools, and orchid houses built by the Baron of Marajó. There is a display of Amazonian wildlife and sculptures of legendary monsters from the Eastern Amazon. Avenida Almirante Barroso, 1622. Open daily 6 am-7 pm.

Museums & Cultural Centers

The Feliz Lusitânia Cultural Complex

★★★The **Feliz Lusitânia Cultural Complex** (Núcleo Cultural Feliz Lusitânia) is a section of the historic district with Portuguese-style 17th- and 18th-century buildings worth a visit. There are several interesting museums here, with guides available.

Lauro Sodré Palace (Palácio Lauro Sodré) was the main government palace during the Colonial period, and dates from 1772. Inside is the State Museum, which has art exhibitions. At Praça Dom Pedo II, it opens Tuesday through Friday 10 am-6 pm and weekends 9 am-1 pm. ☎ 91-225-3853.

Antonio Lemos Palace (Palácio Antonio Lemos), or "Blue Palace (Palácio Azul), was built in 1883 by Italian architects. It houses both **City Hall** and the **Belém Art Museum**. Inside are marble staircases and Amazonian wood floors. Lemos was the provincial governor who built many of the public squares in town. Praça Dom Pedro II. Open Tuesday through Sunday 9 am-6 pm. ☎ 91-242-3344.

★The **Castle Fort** (Forte de Castelo) was built to defend the river in 1616. There is a view of the Bay from here with antique cannons poking out over the water. Praça Frei Caetano Brandão. Open daily 7 am-9 pm. ☎ 91-223-4374.

The **Sacred Art Museum** (Museu de Arte Sacra) is the only Amazonian museum of its kind with works from the 17th through the 20th centuries. It's at the Church of Saint Alexander (dating from 1718) in front of Sé Cathedral.

Residence Park (Parque de Residência) on Avenida Magalhães Barata, 830, was once the Governor's Mansion and is now the Culture Secretariat and a leisure center. Open Tuesday through Sunday 9 am-10:30 pm. ☎ 91-249-3001.

Historic Churches

★The **Sé Cathedral** on Praça Caetano Brandão was built in 1771, with panels by Domenico de Angelis, the same Italian artist who helped build

Manaus. The cathedral is the starting point for the Círio de Nazaré Procession (see *Festivals*).

★The **Basílica de Nazaré**, a reproduction of Saint Paul's Basilica in Rome, with its bronze doors, was built in 1909 during the peak of Belém's glory. Most of the materials came from Europe, but the cedar roof is from Brazil. There is a museum here dedicated to the Círio de Nazaré Festival. Praça Justo Chermont. ☎ 91-223-9399.

Our Lady of Mercy Church (N.S. de Mercês), on Praça Governador José Malcher, dates from 1640 and is the oldest in the city. A simple church, it was a scene of combat during the violent Cabanagem Rebellion.

Church of Carmo (Igreja de Carmo), on Praça de Carmo, 72, was built on the ruins of the old Carmo Chapel dating from 1690, but the present church is from 1777. Inside are still some elements from the original chapel.

LEGENDS OF THE AMAZON

A statue of the Mapinguari (Lalo de Almeida)

The Eastern Amazon region is full of indigenous folk tales mixed with European superstitions. You can see some representations of these myths at the Rodrigues Alves Park. *Mapinguari* is a terrible, forest creature with only one eye that makes human-sounding cries to attract its victims. It then crams them head-first into its gigantic mouth. Another scary one is *Matinta Perêra*, a shape-changing witch who goes around during the full moon to cause terrible curses. The protector of forest wildlife is *Caipora* (sometimes *Curupira*), who rides a wild pig and lures human hunters onto bewildering trails deep into the jungle. Another famous legend in the entire Amazon region is that of the pink dolphin, or *boto-cor-de-rosa*. It transforms itself into a handsome young man who charms unsuspecting young ladies while bathing at the river or at dances. Suspecting nothing, they fall in love. He then leaves them with child and disappears into the river. Thus, single mothers in the region are said to have met a *boto*. The dolphin is also considered a protector of women in the rivers, and is believed to come to the rescue of women who are victims of shipwrecks.

Another famous legend is of the "Amazons." Early Spanish explorers, attacked by natives along the river, noticed that women battled alongside men and so named the river for the legendary Amazon female warriors of ancient Greece. In fact there is a folktale about the *Icamiabas*, a tribe of women who were fiercely territorial. Once a year, they received the warriors of the Guacaris as their husbands, keeping the female offspring and returning the males. On that day, they dove into the rivers and pulled up handfuls of mud to make special amulets such as fish, frogs, and turtles. They gave them to the Guacari warriors when they went home, tied to strands of their hair. Today these good luck charms are called *Muiraquitãs* and are sold around the region.

Woman wearing Muiraquitãs charms

Adventures on the Water

Delta Cruises & River Excursions

One of the traditional pastimes is to take a boat from Belém to the surrounding regions. These trips come in dozens of varieties, but you have the following basic options.

Half-day or full-day bay tours cruise the Amazon river delta around the islands and historic sites, while enjoying snacks such as *tacacá* on board. Trips leave either during the day or to see the sun go down over the water. The "Luzes da Cidade" (lights of the city) boat leaves at 8 pm, a great program at night. Boats leave from the Estação das Docas. Tickets for these trips are available from Lusotur, Travel in Turismo, and Augetur (see To*ur Agencies*).

There are also day-long river excursions that cruise the several dozen sparsely populated or deserted islands around Belém's city limits, such as Mosqueiro, Outeiro and Tatuoca. These trips give you a glimpse of jungle, though it's not virgin rainforest, without having to travel far, sometimes with trails included. Some let you see the traditional river communities with houses on stilts up-close. There are a lot of variations, sometimes with lunch, sometimes on a fast boat, sometimes with side-trips in a motorized canoe for close-up viewing of the rainforest. Shop around – every tour agency in Belém offers a tour of this kind.

If you don't mind waking early, you can watch the first rays of sunlight break over the treetops of **Parrot Island** (Ilha de Papagaio), when thousands of parrots fly out of the forest in search for food. The excursion leaves daily from the port at 4:30 am and returns to Belém at 8:30 am.

Parrot Island

Breakfast and hotel transfer are sometimes included. Afterwards is a perfect time to check out the Mercado Ver-o-Peso – the market. These trips are available through Amazonstar, Augetur, and Lusotur (see *Tour Agencies*).

A bit more secluded, **Sirituba Beach** offers a pleasant 20-minute ecological walk. To get there you need to take a boat in the morning (around 9:30-10 am) and plan on spending about six hours. The tour usually includes a guide, live music, lunch, dancers and bar service, with an option to swim in the Marajó Bay. This trip is offered by Lusotur and Augetur (see *Tour Agencies*).

Roughing It: Regional Boats From Belém to Manaus

Taking a regional boat up the Amazon to Manaus is an authentic cultural experience that goes beyond the package tours available from outfitters. The trip is slow and without any luxuries, and it can be a little tedious since you spend most of your time in a hammock on-board. The upside is that you have the chance to see the entire river and meet some locals. For backpackers this can be interesting a fairly economical way to see the whole region.

The different kinds of regional boats are explained in the Western Amazon section on river expeditions. The only real difference between going upriver from Belém or downriver from Manaus is that it is faster going downriver – about three days and three nights, compared to about five days upriver. Leaving from Manaus, you typically stop at the towns of Itacoatiara, Parintins, Juruti, Oriximinã, Óbidos, Santarém, Monte Alegre, Prainha, Almerim, Gurupá, the Breves Straight (the narrowest part of the trip), Breves, Baiá de Guará and, finally, Belém.

At each town you stop for about two hours for loading and unloading so you can stretch your legs a bit and look around, or stock up on supplies. Sightseeing is not part of the package.

If leaving from Belém, a great option is to take a high-end cruise liner with a pool on board and air-conditioned rooms, stopping in Santarém. This is a world of difference from the cramped and crowded regional boats the locals use to get around.

No matter what you choose, you should buy your tickets in advance and keep in mind that departure times can be erratic due to navigation conditions. If needed, you can usually sleep on board before departure and save a little money on lodging.

Trips generally include three meals a day, with a bar, snack bar, and a leisure area, but you may want to bring some non-perishable foods, as the meals can be pretty grim on board.

If you look around you can find boats for half the price or even less, such as cargo ships that carry passengers as a sideline or wooden vessels, but be careful – overcrowding can cause them to sink and this does happen! They vary in quality and travel time, and you should verify that there are life preservers on board. Tour guides and agencies can help you choose a good one.

In general there is little privacy on board apart from suites with private bathrooms (often designed for two passengers in the same cabin), or cabins for two with communal bathrooms. Most people travel cheaply in hammocks using communal bathrooms, which are reasonably clean. Keep an eye on your valuables.

In Manaus, boats leave from Porto São Raimundo in the port area. In Belém, they leave from the river port at Avenida Marechal Hermes.

The most comfortable and recommended operator is **Empresa de Navegação A.R. Transporte** (**Enart**). Enart operates four high-end catamarans leaving twice a week. The ships include the ***Amazon Star***, with 17 suites, 36 cabins, and 850 hammocks, the ***Cisne Branco***, with four suites, five cabins and 180 hammocks, the ***11 de Maio***, with six suites, four cabins, and 180 hammocks, and the ***Clívia***, with no suites, 16 cabins, and 180 hammocks. Prices are about $100 for hammock space, $350 for a cabin, and $425 for a suite.

Amazon Star

Side-Trips

Mosqueiro Island

Mosqueiro Island is an Amazonian beach area about 40 minutes by boat from Belém. The architecture of the island villa on the southeast tip of the island is from the 1920s and vaguely resembles Europe, but the real attractions are the beaches and trails. There are 18 different river beaches and some can even be surfed! Three-day package tours are probably the best way to visit but you can also go solo – check with

Lusotur or Augetur. To get there on your own take a bus from the Belém bus station. They leave every half-hour from 6 am-11 pm. By car take Federal Highway 316 to state Highway PA 391 (Auguso Meira), which leads to the island. The trip costs 50 cents and takes over an hour. To get around on the island there are local buses that run along the beaches.

The nicest **beach** is **Paraíso** on the north coast but it gets crowded on weekends, especially from June to December. **Farol** or **Chapéu Virado** on the east side are also good. There is a 3,500-yard nature hike here called the **Olhos d'Água Trail**, which starts in the community of Castanhal do Mari-Mari and ends at Caruau, where there is an artisan fair. Watch out for stingrays if you are at an isolated beach (rays don't like crowds), and shuffle your feet in the water to avoid stepping on one. There is decent lodging at the **Hotel Fazenda Paraíso** ($$), with beach, boat trips, ecological walks, volleyball, tennis courts, and a pool on Rua Curuçá,. ☎ 91-772-3444).

Icoaraci

Icoaraci

Vila de Icoaraci has a commercial district called **Pacuri** which is filled with skilled pottery makers who duplicate ancient techniques with replicas of objects found at archeological sites. This is a recommended side-trip where you can actually see the artists at work, molding the clay and using natural pigments in exotic geometric designs. A good place to enjoy Pará's regional cuisine as you shop in Icoaraci is **Na Telha** ($$), on Siqueira Mendes Road, 263 (☎ 91-227-8853). There is also a beach at the villa called **Cruzeiro**, with shacks selling fresh fish and shellfish, plus a great view of the islands where people gather to watch the sunset at the point. It takes about 40 minutes to get here by car, or take a bus from Belém marked Icoaraci from Avenida Presidente Vargas in the Centro. Several tour agencies in Belém offer trips to Icoaraci as well. They take three or four hours and can make it a lot easier for you if you come back with your arms full of pottery!

Pottry shop in Icoaraci

THE FLAVORS OF THE EASTERN AMAZON

Duck in tucupi sauce

The Eastern Amazon is famous for its cuisine. Similar to the Amazonian styles elsewhere, there are heavy influences from the indigenous foods with European and African styles mixed in. Manioc, forest herbs, fruits, and fish are emphasized, but there are also regional dishes such as *pato no tucupi* – duck in manioc juice cooked for days. *Tucupi* can also be served with fish, pork, and various kinds of game, or in *tacacá*, which includes specially prepared clear manioc jelly, dried shrimp, and mouth-tingling *jambú* leaves, slurped down in a gourd. Manioc is also served in tapioca, sometimes filled with light coalho cheese, or as toasted flour called *farofa,* which is served in much coarser form than in the Northeast. Another local dish is *maniçoba*, a mix of salted meats and sausages (similar to *feijoada*) that are stewed with ground manioc shoots called *maniva*, and cooked for nearly a week. *Vatapá* is prepared with dried shrimp, onions, tomatoes, scallions and palm oil, steeped in coconut milk, thickened with rice or wheat flour, then garnished with *jambu*. *Caruru* is made with dried shrimp fried with onion, garlic, scallions, green and black pepper, and palm oil. Then it is boiled and mixed with flour and okra rounds, topped with *jambu* leaves.

Maniçoba

The nutritious Amazonian fruit *açaí* finds its way into the cuisine of Belém too. Normally drunk as a fruit juice, the purple berry is even served with fried fish in a sauce. Fish is the number one protein, cooked in various ways: stewed in palm oil called *caldeirada* or as *peixada*, where fish heads are stewed with spices and potatoes, then cooked with filets of marinated fish, mixed with eggs, manioc flour and hot *pimenta de cheiro* on top. In Belém most common is *filhote*, a tasty and soft-textured fish, or *dourado*, but you can also enjoy typical Amazonian fish such as *pirarucu* or *tucunaré*. Dried shrimp is eaten as a snack. Near the coast, the local specialty is crab. For dessert, there is ice cream or mousses made with tropical fruits.

Where to Eat

Fruit popsicles (called *picolé*) are sold from wandering vendors at **Praça Batista Campo** in the Centro. *Cupuaçu*, *graviola*, *cajá*, *bacuri*, and *muruci* are flavors you won't find anywhere else.

Açai ($$) in the Hilton Hotel has good regional buffets with crab, the famous *pato no tucupi* (duck in manioc juice) and stewed *filhote* in *tucupi*. Sometimes there is live music. At Avenida President Vargas, 882, in the old town (Velha Cidade) neighborhood, it's open Monday through Sunday for lunch and dinner. ☎ 91-242-6500.

Avenida ($$) serves a traditional lunch buffet on Sunday. It has a beautiful view of the Basilica. Avenida Nazaré 1085, in the Nazaré neighborhood. Open daily for lunch and dinner. ☎ 91-223-4015.

Berlim ($$$) is a German restaurant at Avenida Almirante Wandekolk, 751, in the Umarizal neighborhood. Open Tuesday through Saturday for dinner. ☎ 91-241-7877.

Bistrô da Rita ($$$) serves French cuisine for lunch and dinner Monday through Friday, and lunch on Sunday. Rua Ferreira Cantão, 130 (on the corner of Rua Carlos Gomes).

Boteco das Onze ($$) is a great place for a snack or a beer in the historic district at Praça Frei Caetano Brandão, near the Feliz Lusitânia Cultural Complex. ☎ 91-224-8599.

Boulevard ($-$$) is a simple place serving contemporary cuisine for lunch and dinner at Avenida Visconde de Souza Franco, 455 in Reduto. ☎ 91-241-1476.

Izumo ($$$) serves pan-Asian and Brazilian dishes with an emphasis on Japanese cuisine in an air-conditioned environment. Rua 3 de Maio, 1536, in São Brás. ☎ 91-249-7417.

Lacuticho ($$) serves heavy comida mineira**? with an Amazonian touch. There are Brazilian country music singers on Friday night, and all week for the lunch crowd. Open Tuesday through Sunday for lunch and dinner at Rua Bernal do Couto, 40, in the Umarizal neighborhood. ☎ 91-224-8884.

Lá em Casa ($$-$$$) is casual but one of the best regional restaurants in Belém, with a wide selection of local specialties such as *pato no tupuci*. At the Estação de Docas near the Ver-o-Peso market and at Avenida Governador José Malcher, 247, in Nazaré. ☎ 91-212-5588.

La Massilia ($$$) is a small French restaurant with a good reputation. The owner is from Marseilles. Open for dinner every day but Sunday at Rua Henrique Gurjão, 236, a short walk from Praça da República in the Reduto neighborhood. ☎ 91-224-7147.

La Traviata ($$$) is an Italian restaurant open Tuesday through Sunday for lunch and dinner. Avenida Visconde de Souza Franco, 1454, in Nazaré. ☎ 91-241-4560.

La Vie em Rose ($$$) serves French cuisine for dinner Tuesday through Saturday and lunch on Doming**(?) at Rua Diogo Moia, 833, in the Umarizal neighborhood. ☎ 91-2610-4500.

Le Petit Paris ($$$) serves French cuisine in a mansion from 100 years ago. Inside there are photographic works and paintings, with a reserved dining room called the Salão Creolle, and the mezzanine for couples in love. Open daily for lunch and dinner. Rua Ferreira Cantão, 389, in the Condor neighborhood. ☎ 91-252-3113.

Marulhos ($$-$$$) offers regional specialties with a view of the Guamá River and live music. Open daily for lunch and dinner at Av. Bernardo Sayão, 4804 (at the Beira Rio Hotel), in Guamá. ☎ 91-249-5141.

Miako ($$) has Japanese and Chinese cuisine and is attached to the Hilton. Open for dinner. Travessa Primeiro de Marco, 766.

Picanha de Ouro ($$) serves Northeastern (not Amazonian) regional cuisine at Rua Bernal do Couto, 85, in Umarizal. Open for lunch Monday through Thursday, and for dinner throughout the week. ☎ 91-241-8869.

Restô do Parque ($$) offers regional specialties for lunch and dinner every day but Monday at Av. Governador Magalhães Barata, 830, in the Parque da Residência (see *Sightseeing*). Lunch is plate-by-weight buffet and dinner is à la carte. ☎ 91-229-8000.

Restô da Estação ($$) is at the Estação das Docas on Avenida Presidente Vargas with a very good lunch buffet. ☎ 91-212-3737.

Where to Go Out

The nightlife in Belém is reasonably active and it can be fun to mingle with the crowds in the neighborhoods where people tend to go.

Estação das Docas

The **Estação das Docas**, on Avenida Castilho Franca, in the renovated port district is one of the best places to go, but it closes on Mondays. Close to the Ver-o-Peso market, people come here day or at night to enjoy the view over the bay and relax. The old harbor-side warehouses have been converted into bars and restaurants. Sometimes there is live music, expositions, and performances as well and you can browse the regional gift shops. The seafood here is especially good. Upstairs are self-serve places and table service is down below. **Amazon Beer**, at Armazén number one, opens for happy hour Monday through Wednesday in the evenings with live music and a self-service buffet for about $7 per person.

Don't confuse the Estação das Docas with the **Bairro de Docas** neighborhood, another popular night spot along Avenida Visconde de Souza Franco. There are a bunch of bars concentrated in a single place called the **Doca Boulevard building**, where a generally young crowd gathers after dark. It's a short taxi ride from the Centro. **The Bulldog Sport Bar** is recommended here.

Not far away in the **Umarizal** neighborhood, you might stop in at **Água Doce Cachaçaria** on Rio Diogo Móia, 283 (☎ 91-222-3383), or **Arara Blue** on Avenida Alcindo Cacela. On Saturdays you can catch live *samba* and *pagode* shows at **Bar Periquito Yellow** from 5 pm on, at Rua Alcindo Cacela between Ântonio Barreto and Diogo Moia in this area. **Iron Pigs** also has live music at Avenida Almirante Wandenkolk, 593 (☎ 91-242-8579). Also close by is **Lord Lion** at Rua Almirante Wandenkolk, 419 (☎ 91-225-5100). Take a taxi to these places.

You should try to stop by **Bar do Parque** at Praça da República, in front of the Teatro de Paz. This is a famous dive that draws all types with live music on the weekends.

Where to Stay

Lodging is relatively cheap in Belém. Advance reservations are a good idea around the **Círio de Nazaré** festival, though availability is pretty good the rest of the year. There are 10% service charges and a "tourism tax" of 50 cents per night.

Hotel Hilton Belém ($$$) is first-rate, with full amenities, at Avenida Presidente Vargas, 882, in the Centro. ☎ 0800-780-0888 toll free in Brazil only.

Hotel Regente ($$) is close to the main sightseeing spots and offers ample rooms with amenities such as a pool, Internet services and a travel agency on site. Avenida Governador José Malcher, 485, in the Nazaré neighborhood. ☎ 91-3181-5000.

View from the Hilton Belém

Hotel Sagres ($$) is a spacious hotel with granite floors, exercise room, sauna and pool. Avenida Governador José Malcher, 2927, in the São Brás neighborhood. ☎ 91-4005-0005.

Beira Rio Hotel ($$) is a reasonable hotel with a view of the Guarani River at Avenida Bernardo Sayão, 4804, in the Guamá neighborhood. ☎ 91-249-7111.

Hotel Itaóca Belém ($$) is a good option for the price, with standard amenities. It is at Avenida Presidente Vargas, 132, in the Centro. ☎ 91-241-3434.

Zoghbi Park Hotel ($$) is a comfortable spot at Rua Padre Prudêncio in the Centro. ☎ 91-241-1800.

Vila Rica Belém ($$) has a swimming pool and pets are allowed. Avenida Júlio César, in the Val de Cans neighborhood, 1.2 miles/two km from the airport. ☎ 91-257-1522.

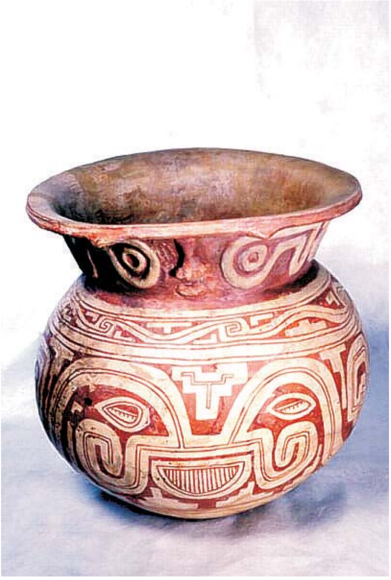
Hotel Ferrador ($) is a reasonable option on Rua Aristides Lobo, 485, in the Centro. ☎ 91-241-5999.

Hotel Equatorial Palace ($$), at Avenida Braz de Aguiar, 612, in the Nazaré neighborhood, has a swimming pool, tennis court and standard amenities. ☎ 91-241-2000.

What to Buy

Belém is one of the top places in Brazil to buy high quality arts and crafts. The best buys are local ceramics, chiefly Marajó and Tapajó styles. Pottery shards found in Santarém show that these techniques are perhaps 10,000 years old. The best place for pottery is Travessa Soledade, in the town of **Icoaraci**, filled with shops (see *Side-Trips* for details).

Other handicrafts worth buying are objects made from deadwood, *açaí* seeds (either white or black), red *tento* seeds, *jarina*, the hard white seed like ivory, and other rainforest products transformed into necklaces and earrings. Sometimes the seeds are tinted blue, yellow or black. Some are traditional and some contemporary, and there are thousands of varieties to choose from. You can find these all over Belém at very cheap prices, especially in the street stalls at **Praça da República** or at the **Ver-o-Peso** market.



Marajó pottery

Belém also has some intriguing local jewelry designs with a sophisticated (and costly) mix of indigenous materials using precious metals, stones, and fibers. The best place to go is the **Polo Joalheiro** at the **Feliz Lusitânia Cultural Complex** (see *Sightseeing*). This beautiful old building formerly served as a convent, military post, pottery plant, hospital, and prison.

Ceramics shop in Belém *(Frank Krämer)*

Here you can also find seeds, bark, fibers, clay and deadwood transformed into works of art, or take a look at the exhibit on ancient art.

A recommended place for jewelry is the **São José Artists Association** at Praça Amazonas, in Jurunas. ☎ 91-230-4451).

Another local product is indigenous woven grass and jute (*juta*), made from the jute plant and formed into bags, dolls, placemats, clothing and other items. You can also find a kind of leathery non-vulcanized rubber called *balata* that is molded into animal shapes. Wooden sculptures, leather, aromatic roots and incense are also common.

A good store for these kinds of things is **Artesentato Juruá** on Avenida Deodoro de Mendonça, 319, in São Brás, open Monday through Saturday 8 am-noon and 2-6 pm.

Artíndia sells indigenous goods at Avenida Presidente Vargas, 762 (at the Galéria da Assembléia Paraense Shop 2) in the Centro, open Monday through Saturday from 9 am-5 pm.

The **Loja Regional** on Avenida Presidente Vargas, 314, sells local crafts and religious articles. Open Monday through Saturday 8 am-8 pm.

Marajó Artesanato sells ceramics and other arts and crafts from the region at Avenida Presidente Vargas, 314. Open Monday through Saturday 8 am-6 pm.

Ilha de Marajó

- Travel by water buffalo to rustic farmhouse inns
- See exotic and remote beaches on a primitive island
- Buy ceramics made in indigenous styles

Marajó Island on the Atlantic coast between the Amazon and Tocantins Rivers is the largest fluvial-marine island in the world. With close to 14 million acres/five million hectares, it is the size of a small European country. People come for the beaches, wetlands, savannahs, dunes, waterways and the interesting flora and fauna (like the graceful scarlet ibis). There is an exotic local culture that has its roots in indigenous groups and slaves who fled to the island from Grão Pará in a social revolt caused by their extreme poverty.

The island is best known for two things besides its natural beauty: its exquisite and intricate **ceramics** and the **water buffalos**. The buffalo is

Marajó water buffalos

how most residents earn a living, either through transport, dairy or ranching and these sturdy beasts, originally from India and brought here by Europeans, are perfectly adapted to the environment.

There are 12 different towns on the island, but the lodging and restaurants are in two main cities: **Soure** and **Salvaterra**. Soure is the most popular, but there are many ranches where you can stay on the island as well. They are adapted for visitors, and provide a more authentic Marajó experience. The island has a fascinating history dating back thousands of years, when indigenous groups built earthen ramparts to protect their maize and manioc crops from flooding and left ceremonial burial grounds where shards of pottery have been found. About 3,000 years ago was the peak of this culture, when the intricate designs of the pottery, replicated today by skilled artisans with near perfection, became some of the most prized examples of pre-Colombian artistry in the country. Most of the natives finally fled during the bloody conquest by the Portuguese in the 18th century.

When to Go

The best time to visit Marajó is from June through January, since constant rainfall swamps the Eastern half of the island during the rest of the year.

Note: Always wear shoes on the island due to parasites that can enter through the feet!

Getting There & Getting Around

Boats from **Belém** to the island town of **Camará** leave daily from the Pedro Teixeira Square. From there you can take a 20-minute bus or private van to Salvaterra, and then onto Soure. At Soure you have to take a free hourly ferry that runs daily or hire a private motorboat for a few dollars.

Arapari Navegação leaves at 7 am and 3 pm from **Belém**, every day but Sunday, on the three-hour trip, which costs under $10. ☎ 91-212-

2492). You can also take the **Empresa de Navegação da Amazônia** (**ENASA**) boats in the mornings Tuesday through Thursday at 6:30 am from the Port in Belém, leaving from dock number four, returning in the afternoon (☎ 91-241-5884 or 91-242-5870). On Fridays at 6 pm, ENASA runs a 5½-hour boat to **Soure** that returns on Sunday.

Air-taxi companies to Marajó Island operate in Belém, with a 30-minute flight that costs around $350 for a small group. Planes depart from **Júlio César Airport** on Avenida Senador Lemos, number 4700 (☎ 91-233-3986). Additional information can be obtained from travel agencies in Belém.

Once on the island, the preferred mode of transport is by water buffalo. Buses and vans, where available, cost a little over a dollar. Taxis and motorcycle taxis are available, and you can fix a price with a driver for all-day travel (in the dry season only).

Marajó river boat

Generally, to travel long distances on the island or for travel between towns you will need to hire a fishing boat in one of the main towns. During the rainy season, on the eastern portion of the island, it is common to get around by *voadeira*, a fast motorized canoe.

Services are erratic here and minor inconveniences are common. The tour agencies in Belém can simplify your trip.

The Towns

Soure is the main town, on the site of an ancient indigenous village. Here there are the floodplains with wildlife and buffalo ranching, with primitive beaches such as Pesqueiro and Araruna. The town is reasonably well organized for international tourism, with adequate transport and a pleasant climate year-round.

Salvaterra is similar, but smaller, and also a site where the indigenous people lived before being driven out by the Portuguese. To this day, artifacts are being discovered after the rains. In Salvaterra there is **Joanes**, an authentic fishing village with beaches and fish in abundance all year. It can be reached by a bus that runs sporadically during the day.

For More Information

The **Soure City Hall** is on 2 Rua, 351, and the municipal tour board in Salvaterra has information (☎ 91-3765-1102). There are no places to trade currency here, but in Soure there is a **Banco do Brasil** branch on 3 Rua where you can try a Visa cash advance at the ATM, open only in the mornings and early afternoon. Package tours eliminate this problem.

Sightseeing

The **Marajó Museum** (Museu de Marajó) is in the tiny town of **Cachoeira do Arari**, 45 miles/75 km from Soure by dirt road (☎ 91-3758-1102). The trip gives a scenic glimpse into the ecosystems of the island and the museum is known for its displays of pre-Colombian ceramics found in burial mound excavations as well as other crafts and regional cultural displays. There is a boat that leaves from Camará port at 6 am, returning at 12 am, or at 1 pm, returning at 6 pm. Or you can catch a bus in the dry season from Salvaterra that leaves once a day, at 10 am.

Scarlet ibis flock on Marajó (Frank Krämer)

Adventures in Marajó

Marajó landscape

The beaches in Marajó are quite good, with coarse white sand dunes, and gorgeous views of the Atlantic Ocean. They get busy on the weekends. Most but not all have shacks or stands that sell drinks and snacks during the busy periods, so you should bring water with you and perhaps a snack to be sure. In Soure, the most popular

Barra Velha Beach

are **Barra Velha**, a little over a mile away and reachable on foot. A bit farther on is **Araruna**, but you will need to cross a river by boat. **Pesqueiro** is about four miles away – take a bus or van. Shacks there serve *carangeijo toc-toc* (whole crab) and green coconuts to drink. In Salvaterra, there are **Praia Grande**, the most popular and close to town, **Joanes**, which you reach by bus (near the beach there are ruins of a 17th-century church, but little remains), and **Monsarás**, also reached by bus or van. Access is along the Arauna Highway. Watch for stingrays, and always shuffle your feet under water to ward them off, especially at Monsarás.

What to Buy

While most of the supposedly *Marajoara* ceramics are today made in **Icoaraci** (which is frankly more convenient to visit than Marajó), you can buy replicas virtually identical to the ancient pottery for very modest prices at **Arte em Barro**, on Travessa 20 in Soare. Open daily. Or visit the cooperative **Sociedade Marajoara das Artes** on 3rd Rua, also open daily (except during the lunch hour), in Soare. Around the island another typical local product is buffalo leather, and you can buy buffalo sandals, belts, boots and other such items for not very much money.

Where to Stay

Lodging options are limited here, ranging from barely decent to fairly good, and virtually all are family-run. The better options are listed here. You can count on air-conditioning, but not much else in the way of luxuries. Rooms fill up during the high season from July through December.

The ranches (*fazendas*) listed below offer day-trips and are an interesting option for wildlife viewing, horseback or buffalo rides, kayak and sport fishing along the waterways, among other adventures, but they tend to be very rustic and simple. Credit cards may not be accepted in all places.

Lodging in Soure

Hotel Soure ($) has simple accommodations with either air-conditioning or ceiling fans, on 3 Rua, 1347, downtown. ☎ 91-3741-1202 or 91-3228-2009.

Paracauarí Eco-Resort ($) is a simple but appealing place with a pool is on Avenida Prado. ☎ 91-3222-6442.

Hotel Araruna ($) has modest but reasonable accommodations with air-conditioning at 14th Travessa, 1150. ☎ 91-3229-3928.

Hotel Ilha do Marajó ($$) is the nicest hotel in town with 32 rooms, air-conditioning and a pool at 2 Street. ☎ 91-3224-5966 or 91-3741-1315.

Hotel Ilha do Marajó

Lodging in Salvaterra

Pousada dos Guarás

Pousada dos Guarás ($$) has bungalows near the beach on Avenida Beira Mar at Praia Grande. All credit cards are accepted. Call in Belém (☎ 91-241-0891 or 91-242-6273), and in Salvaterra (☎ 91-765-1133).

Pousada Bosque dos Aruãs ($) is at 2 Rua and Avenida Beira-Mar. It has wooden bungalows with fans or air-conditioning. ☎ 91-765-1115.

Ranches

Fazenda Bom Jardim ($$$) is two hours by boat from Soure or half an hour by plane from Belém. Lodging is limited so advance reservations are required. There are 11,000 acres/4,000 ha of forest and plains to explore, including alligator spotting at night, piranha fishing, and you can try your hand at ranching the buffalo. 27 miles/45 km from Soure. ☎ 91-242-1380 in Belém or 91-9969-8006.

Fazenda Nossa Senhora de Carmo-Camará ($$) is 21 miles/35 km from Beiradão or 4.8 miles/eight km from Salvaterra, then up the Câmara River by boat. Or get there by plane from June through December. It has canoes and natural swimming holes, sport fishing and horseback riding, with a ranch house of wood and stone. ☎ 91-3788-2054 or 91-241-2202 in Belém.

Where to Eat

Restaurants are very simple here. Buffalo steak and buffalo cheese is the local specialty, cooked in a variety of ways. If you don't eat meat, don't despair – there is plenty of fish here too.

The whole crab (*carangeijo toc-toc*) is a good option, and is also served at the beaches.

Delicias de Nalva ($) at the Pesqueiro beach on 4 Rua in Soure, 1051, serves local specialties for lunch and dinner.

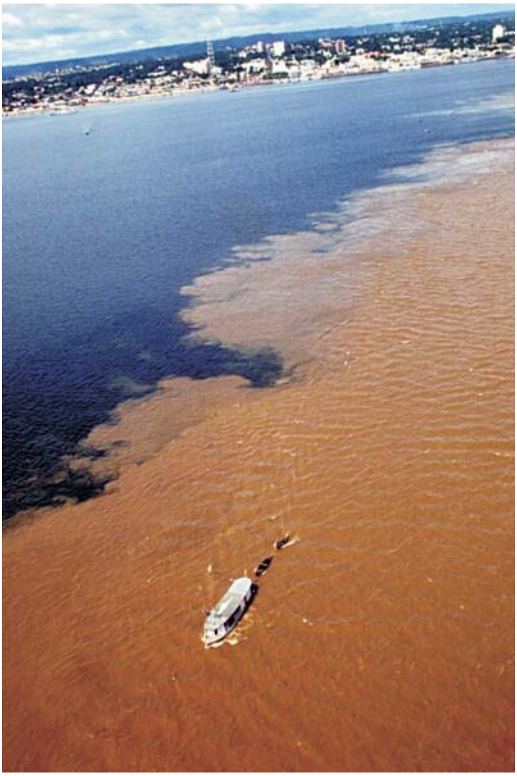
Minha Deusa ($) on the Soure-Araruna Highway and Travessa 14 is close to the Araruna beach, serving regional specialties for lunch and dinner.

Some other suggestions for cheap, good eats and drinks in Soure are **Bar Canecão** on 3 Rua, **Signus Bar** on 1 Rua, **Bar da Ponte** on 1 Rua, and **Bar Tombo** do Jutaí at 5 Rua.

In Salvaterra, the restaurant in **Pousada Bosque de Aruãs** at 2 Rua and Avenida Beira-Mar is good for lunch or dinner.

Santarém: the "Pearl of the Tapajós"

- Gateway to the central Amazon and Rio Tapajós
- See the "Caribbean of the Amazon" in Alter do Chão
- Rugged eco-travel in the Amazônia National Park



Tapajós and Amazonas rivers meet – Santarém in the distance

Santarém is about halfway up the Amazon river to Manaus near the Western Amazon region, at the junction with the blue-green Rio Tapajós. This is a fishing town dating back to a Jesuit mission founded in 1626. Santarém is the largest town between Belém and Manaus, with close to 300,000 residents if you count the surrounding villages. It is the main destination in the region and includes the exotic resort area of **Alter-do-Chão**, sometimes called the "Caribbean of the Amazon" because of its white sand beaches. Besides the beaches, there are inviting waterways that are seldom traveled. Here you can observe the spectacular junction of the rivers where the two distinct waterways – Rio Amazonas and Rio

Tapajós – run side-by-side before merging. The waterways along the Tapajós are crystal clear and the friendly dolphins called *botos* follow your canoe as you drift through the immense green rainforest. Along the banks you can see traditional *caboclo* houses on stilts and endless varieties of colorful birds. You may even see a water buffalo swimming along and perfectly adapted to this environment. In Alter-do-Chão, the warm and clear waters invite a swim, or exploration by canoe into the many islands and sandbars around Lago Verde, the "green lake," where the local residents, mostly hospitable *borari* indigenous families, welcome tourists.

Santarém is the gateway to more exotic adventures up the Rio Tapajós. Upriver there are traditional settlements over 150 years old that have changed little since they were founded. Nature lovers will appreciate the **Tapajós National Forest**, the habitat of primates, tropical birds such as the chattering green parrot called the *maracanã*, and countless varieties of trees and other vegetation. For even rougher adventures, you can visit **Amazônia National Park** near the village of Itaituba. Temperatures here range from 72-95°F year-round and, as in the rest of the Amazon, the only difference from one season to another is in the amount of rainfall.

Getting There & Getting Around

Santarém is 450 miles/750 km from Belém on the Amazon River. By air you can fly Varig and TAM, or via regional flights on Rico, Meta and Tavaj – the flight is about an hour from Belém and longer from Brasília. To get to Alter-do-Chão, take a rental car from the airport or a taxi (which costs around $20).

There are daily riverboats to Santarém from Belém or Manaus that take about two days (longer going upriver, shorter going downriver). **Enart** is a recommended company (see *Belém*).

On maps, the Transamazonica Highway passes through Santarém, but this insane state project to build a road through the Amazon has completely disappeared in some stretches, and other stretches are useful only during certain times of the year.

In theory you can get here in a four-wheel drive vehicle with an experienced guide. That is not recommended but, depending on your sense of adventure and spare time, it might be fun. Overland, it will take you from three to eight days depending on the skill of your guide, with the dry season being quicker and the rainy season slower. Check with the travel guides in Belém if you want to take your chances.

Santarém has good basic facilities. Your main point of reference is the Docas (docks) on the river toward the west. On the other side, to the east about a mile, you will find shops, travel guides and other sights in the Centro. Credit cards and travelers checks are generally not accepted in Santarém – you will need cash. There is an **HSBC** bank (Cirrus system) ATM on Rua Floriano Peixoto, and **Bradesco** or **Banco do Brasil** ATMs (for Visa transactions) on Avenida Rui Barbosa. If that doesn't work, try trading cash at the tour agencies.

For More Information

The **Tourism Secretariat** has info (☎ 93-523-2434), but the best information about the region comes from the local guides: **Amazon Tours**, www.amazonriver.com, ☎ 93-9122-0299, or **Santarém Tour**, www.santaremtur.com.br, ☎ 93-522-4847.

Festivals & Events

Every September, there is the festival of **Çairé** in Alter-do-Chão. This eight-day festival attracts tourists from around the world. It dates back to the Colonial period when the Borari indigenous group crafted the Çairé, a "Noah's arc" made of wood that represented what they had learned from the missionaries. Today, these symbols are intermingled with native legends like that of the pink river dolphin who seduces young women by the riverbank. There are dozens of music and dance presentations typical of the region.

Sightseeing

Santarém's **Regional Port** on the west side of town at the start of Highway BR-163 is an interesting place to look around.

In the Centro, the ★**Municipal Market** at Avenida Tapajós and Travessa Sendor Lemos has stalls of fruits, fish, manioc and medicinal plants.

Market in Santarém

Going up Rua Adriano Pimentel from the market, is a little park facing the **Cathedral of Nossa Senhora da Conceção** on Avenida Siqueira Campos, whose five-foot crucifix came from a wrecked expedition of the German river explorer Von Martius. The cathedral dates from 1791.

Take a walk along the river nearby where local artisans sell tiny frog amulets called *muiraquitãs*. A few hundred yards farther on is the **Praça de Pescador**, or "fisherman's plaza," where fishmongers and fruit merchants hawk their wares in the mornings.

From here you can walk into town and up the hill to the **Tapajós Lookout Point** on Avenida Joaquim Braga, where there is a fantastic view of the meeting of the Tapajós and Amazon Rivers and the island that formed between them due to river sediment called **Ilha do Meio**.

★**Solar do Barão de Santarém** is on the plaza facing the Cathedral of Nossa Senhora da Conceção. Built in the first half of the 19th century, the mansion was the home of Miguel Antônio Pinto Guimarães, a rubber baron. Today it is owned by the family that runs the shops downstairs and they will show you the place. Avenida Senador Lameira Bitencourt, 145.

★The **Santarém History Museum** (also called the João Fona Cultural Center) has an amazing collection of Tapajoara ceramics. The building dates from 1867, but little remains of the original. It is on the waterfront just east of the Centro on the Praça de Santarém. Entrance is by donation. Open weekdays 8 am-5 pm. ☎ 91-522-1383.

★Adventures on Land

A few miles from Santarém there is a half-day walking trip through the rainforest of **Santa Lúcia Grove** (Bosque Santa Lúcia), off a side-road from Highway BR 163. You will see many different species of Amazonian trees and plants, including the medicinal *ipê*, Brazil nut trees, mahogany, rubber trees, rosewood, cedar, cocoa and many others, with views of the rivers. The trip costs about $25 per person (minimum of two people). Contact Amazon Tours or Santarém Tours (see *Tour Guides*, above).

Adventures on the Water

★★The **Junction of the Tapajós and Amazonas** occurs in front of Santarém and continues for a few miles. With a short boat ride you can see up-close where the two rivers meet and run side-by-side without mixing due to the difference in sediment, velocity and temperature of the waters. From the Port of Santarém there are hundreds of boats to take you there. They usually pass by Ilha do Meio, and island that "appeared" about three decades ago in the river. Boats also travel along the igarapé Açu, where you can see giant water lilies, cranes, and other waterfowl, as well as houses on stilts along the banks of the river. The trip takes about two hours.

There are nearly 1,250 miles/2,100 km of beaches in the surrounding region, which appear during the low water period (normally they start to disappear from March and start coming back around August). There are too many to cite here, but local guides can take you to the beaches with remote access, or you can simply find your own without trouble. The most popular by far are in nearby **Alter do Chão** (see *Side-Trips*), but there are others such as Ponta do Cururu, Ponta de Pedras, Caraparanaí, Arariá, Maria José.

Where to Stay

There is a steep drop in quality at the low-end places. The following hotels are recommended. None are exceptionally luxurious. A 10% service charge is normally added.

Amazon Park Hotel ($$) has comfortable amenities, including pool, shops, restaurant, dancing and beer hall. Avenida Mendonça Furtado, 4120. ☎ 91-523-2800.

Santarém Palace Hotel ($) is a nice economical hotel with air-conditioned rooms and breakfast included, at Avenida Rui Barbosa, 726, downtown. ☎ 91-522-1779.

Brasil Grande Hotel ($) is an economical hotel with air-conditioned rooms and breakfast included at Travessa 15 de Agosto, 213, downtown. ☎ 91-522-5660 or 91-523-1986.

New City Hotel ($), at Travessa Francisco Correa, 200, is centrally located and offers basic amenities such as hot showers and air-conditioning, breakfast included. ☎ 91-522-3764.

Where to Eat

Try **Mascote** ($$), at Praça do Pescador 10, open daily for lunch and dinner. The specialty is river fish, such as the *peixada* made from tasty peacock bass. ☎ 91-523-2844.

Another option for fish is **Peixaria Piracatu** ($$), open only for lunch. ☎ 91-523-5098.

The restaurant at the **Amazon Park Hotel** ($$) is a frequent choice among international travelers. Avenida Mendonça Furtado, 4120. ☎ 91-523-2800.

Side-Trip

★★★Alter-do-Chão

The beaches and the very clear waters of the Tapajós River make Alter-do-Chão the preferred destination for most travelers in the region. Because of the white sand, this little resort town has been called the Caribbean of the Amazon. Keep in mind that the beaches disappear under water during the rainy season from June to July.

It is an unusually beautiful location, with curious effects of the sunlight over the clear Lago Verde, a lagoon that reflects the rainforest and shimmers either blue or green depending on the hour – a phenomenon steeped in local legend.

In town, check out the indigenous museum called **Centro de Preservação de Artes Indigenas**, at Rua Dom Macêdo Costa, 500. In

Alter-do-Chão beach

the vicinity, there are some excellent local arts and crafts shops where you can purchase typical indigenous handicrafts. There is a bit of walking around in the city so you might want to bring loose clothing, sun block and sunglasses.

Just 19 miles/32 km from Santarém, Alter-do-Chão is a stop along the way for regional Amazon River charters. You can arrange a day-trip from the tour agencies in Santarém. There is access overland from Santarém by bus along a good road for about 75 cents or $11 by taxi. Buses from Alter to Santarém run on uneven schedules every one to two hours from 6 am-7:30 pm on weekdays and every hour from 8 am-7 pm on weekends. From Santarém to Alter, they run from 5 am-6 pm on uneven schedules every one to two hours on weekdays and every hour from 7 am-5 pm on weekends. The trip takes about an hour.

The food here relies heavily on traditional Amazonian styles. There are a few restaurants ($-$$) on the main plaza in town or along the beaches.

For lodging try the **Pousada Alter-do-Chão** ($) Rua Lauro Sodré, 74, or the **Pousada Tupaiulândia** ($) on Rua Pedro Teixeira, 300 (between Travessa Agostinho Lobato and Ferrônio Costa). The latter offers boat excursions for up to 20 people (about $5 per person for four hours); ☎ 93-527-1157 or 93-527-1115. The **Hotel Beloalter** ($$), on Rua Pedro Teixeira, 38, a short walk from the center of town on the banks of Lago Verde, is a little nicer, with air-conditioned rooms, hot water and verandahs. ☎ 93-527-1230 or 93-527-1247.

Adventures Up the Rio Tapajós

The Tapajos River is 500 miles long, navigable from its estuary to Itaituba, 180 miles/300 km, and is the largest clear-water river in the Amazon Basin. During the low waters, it is about six feet deep. The dry period is June through October. The river experiences tidal action due to its proximity to the ocean, with waves close to a foot and a half. Closer to the estuary it ceases to be navigable due to waterfalls and exposed rocks. There is detailed information in English about navigation on the river at the government Internet site: www.transportes.gov.br/bit/hidro/EGriotapa.htm.

Tapajós National Forest

- Excellent wildlife typical of the central Amazon
- Stay with local *caboclo* communities
- Swim, hike or take a canoe through the jungle

The Tapajós National Forest (Floresta Nacional de Tapajós) is one of the most beautiful locations in Pará. The wildlife and vegetation are particularly abundant near the Tapajós and Amazon rivers. The park is an experiment in sustainable Amazon development with a program of that allows you to stay with local river communities. They will demonstrate their traditional lifestyles of fishing and rubber tapping to visitors and sell locally made handicrafts. The communities have been there for over 150 years and this deal was struck to avoid evicting them from public lands. Despite some criticism, the system works fairly well. These days logging and poaching are controlled and in general Tapajós National Forest is in a good state of conservation due mainly to the proceeds from tourism. As elsewhere in the Amazon river basin, the landscape is constantly changing in the forest according to the seasons, and the *igarapés* also sparkle with a unique mix of colors. During the high river season you can drift through the forest in a canoe taking in the beautiful sights and sounds of the rainforest.

Some studies suggest there are at least 215 species of birds in this section of the forest and a wide range of reptiles and amphibians – anacondas and other snakes, caimans, chelonians, iguanas and other intriguing lizards. There are at least 40 species of mammals, including dolphins, marsupials, carnivores and rodents. The dense and shady forest is typical of the Amazon ecosystems, with sandy *várzea* wastelands that appear only in the low water season, *igapós*, and the highlands where trees tower as high as 150 feet, amid cedar and the rare Brazilian rosewood *jacarandá*, rubber and fruit trees like the *açai*, other palms, and Brazil nut trees. It is hot and very humid, with an average annual temperature between 77-79°F. The rainy season is between December and June.

How to Get Here

From **Santarém** there are boats, buses and four-wheel-drive vehicles that can make it into the forest, depending on what community you plan to visit (there are seven in all). Overland access is via BR 163. All visits must be arranged through tour agencies in Santarém, or in some cases Belém. If you go by land, you will have the option of slinging up your hammock in the community you are staying with, or if you go by boat, you may sleep on board. In either case, you will need to bring a hammock. Generally there is only limited, traditional river food available in the region (fish, fruits and manioc), so park administrators advise either getting in touch with the communities in advance or bringing supplies with you to make sure you have enough to eat. The Environmental Protection Agency IBAMA offices are at Avenida Tapajós, 2267, in Santarém (☎ 93-523-2964, flonatapejos.pa@ibama.gov.br). For more information, contact the **Santarém Municipal Tourism Coordinator** at Rua Floriano Peixoto, 434 (☎ 91-523-2434 or 91-522-7994), who can explain how everything works.

Adventures in the Park

The activities in the park are geared entirely toward ecological tourism, with walks through rainforest trails, swimming and snorkeling in the crystal clear Tapajós (watch out for stingrays), canoe trips through the forest to see the local flora and fauna, and interaction with the local communities. As with any national park, you are not allowed to bring anything out of the forest, and park officials ask that you refrain from entering residences or photographing people without their permission.

This is a region considered at risk for hepatitis A, yellow fever, dengue fever, malaria and parasites – consult a doctor about the proper precautions, and drink only bottled water. Insect repellent and long-sleeve shirts and pants are advised. Also, follow your guide's instructions to avoid contact with potentially dangerous wildlife.

The products for sale here are similar to what you might find in Santarém or at the Ver-o-Peso market in Belém, but here you know that your money goes straight to the source. Typical objects are woven baskets, necklaces made from seeds, wooden carvings and items made from Brazil nut husks, vegetable leather (made from rubber), vegetable oils and honey, among others. There is a fee of about a dollar per day to enter the park, a visitation fee of about two dollars per day for the communities, as well as all costs associated with food, transport and guide services.

Guides

The following tour guides and agencies in Santarém and Alter do Chão are authorized by IBAMA to lead visitors to the park. **Santarém Tur**, on Avenida Adriano Pimentel, 44 (☎ 93-522-4847), **Mãe Natureza** at Ilha Guajará in Alter do Chão (maenatureza@uol.com.br, ☎ 93-527-1264), **Sararaca Passeios**, Rua Idinaldo Martins, in Alter do Chão (☎ 93-9121-7113), **ANDA Reflorestamento** on Rua Raimundo Fona, 864, amazoniape@tap.com.br), **Santarém Palace Hotel** at Avenida Rui Barbosa, 726 (stmpalace@netsan.com.br, ☎ 93-523-2820), **Paulo Henrique Melchior Costa** on Travessa 15 de Novembro, 473 (hmelchior@bol.com.br, ☎ 93-523-0247).

Amazônia National Park

- Rugged adventures in the Central Amazon
- Seldom traveled and mostly unspoiled forest
- Interesting geological formations and caves

The Amazônia National Park is a remote destination with awe-inspiring views of native fauna and wildlife up the Rio Tapajós from Santarém. One of the main advantages of the park is that it possible to get here via an overland route – perhaps one of the few remaining virtues of the Transamazonian Highway. The park is one of the largest in Brazil, stretching through 2,455,000 acres/994,000 ha of central Amazônia, with a 406-mile perimeter, in a region that has been an important route for human migration since prehistoric times. Created in 1974 during an Amazonian development drive by the military dictatorship, the park started conflicts with the indigenous groups who see these lands as their territory. There is still illegal lumber extraction and poaching, once facilitated by the now virtually extinct Transamazonian Highway running through the park, but it is diminishing. Visitation conditions are extremely rudimentary here, but at the time of writing, there was an effort underway to improve conditions in the park, including clearing wildlife trails, publishing informative materials for visitors and working with local communities to control the environmental impact of their means of survival. The closest city is **Itaituba**, in Pará, but a section of the park crosses over into Amazonas state, in the vicinity of **Maués** (see the Western Amazon section, page 452), also an excellent destination. The park is filled with interesting geological formations such as caves. The average annual temperature is 75-79°F but can reach a sweltering 100-104°F and a fairly cool minimum of 54-62°F. The best time to go is the dry season from July to December. The waterways recede to offer better wildlife viewing and the temperature is milder. This is also the time when the waters are strikingly clear for snorkeling in the region of Itaituba. Bring a camera or video recorder, mosquito repellent, boots and sunscreen.

Note: This is a region where anti-malarial medication is recommended and yellow fever vaccination is required. A tetanus booster, and Hepatitis A vaccination is advisable if your doctor recommends it.

How to Get Here

The park is on the decrepit Transamazonian Highway BR-230 between Km 53 and 165 in Itaituba, Pará, with a small portion in Amazonas near Maués. The park offices can be reached at ☎ 91-518-1530. You can take a boat up the Rio Tapajós from Santarém, which takes six to 18 hours, depending on what kind of vessel you use, until you reach Itaituba. There is extremely limited lodging and other tourist infrastructure in Itaituba, so check with a guide in Santarém. From Itaituba you take BR-230 another 39 miles/65 km to reach the park. There are also chartered flights from Belém, Manaus and Santarém to the airport at Itaituba. You or your guide must get permission from the **Environmental Protection Agency IBAMA** to enter the park. Their address is Av. Marechal Rondon, no number, in Itaituba.

There is camping available for 25 people in the park, but no faciltities. You can download maps from the park administrators (site is in Portuguese) at this link: www.ibama.gov.br/flona_tapajos/index.php?id_menu=86.

Itaituba

The village of Itaituba is discovering its potential as an ecological tourism area, with very limited services but excellent natural attractions such as caverns, waterfalls, mineral springs and beaches close to the town. There are some hotels and restaurants around town, and there are several options for air taxi service from the airport in small planes, a vestige of the mining days when Itaituba was a gold town with non-stop air cargo movement. Near town, 52 miles/87 km toward Rurópolis on the Transamazonian Highway (BR-230), at the 72 Km marker there is a side-road marked "Transfordlandia," which will take you nine miles/15 km to the spectacular and seldom-traveled **Paraíso Cavern**, between the Baixa Fria and Jibóia *igarapés*, formed entirely from limestone. There are various galleries with limestone formations and subterranean rivers of extraordinary beauty. Check with the travel agencies in Santarém or contact the **Itaituba Tourism Secretariat** for additional information (but not necessarily in English). ☎ 91-518-3177. At the time of writing there were no IBAMA permits required, but it is likely that in the future there will be so you may want to ask. Another adventure near Itaituba is the forested **São Luiz do Tapajós** region, about an hour by Jeep from the town, with rivers, beaches and islands along the riverbanks.

Adventures in the Park

Here you will have a very close look at tropical rainforest wildlife, with numerous species of trees, some growing over 260 feet. The vegetation in this shadowy patch of jungle includes gorgeous orchids, strange mosses and lichens, and interesting trees such as the Brazilian rosewood *jacaranda,* cedar, mahogany and rubber trees. The ecosystems are typical of Amazonia, with *várzea* wastelands surrounded by *igapós* where you will see water lilies and native fruit trees. Though the wildlife is thinly spread out here and mostly nocturnal, there are a wide range of species, especially mammals. You may encounter giant anteaters, armadillos, bush-dogs, short-eared foxes, jaguars, pumas, endangered giant otters, manatees, and both gray and pink river dolphins. There are many kinds of primates and numerous birds, some endangered, such as the harpy eagle and king vultures, as well as other colorful and noisy tropical birds. If you don't like reptiles be warned: there are plenty of caimans, bushmasters, boa constrictors, and other scaled creatures. The waters are also filled with fish as elsewhere in Amazônia, including the legendary peacock bass.

Due to the topography, with a lot of high ground, there are many trails through dense rainforest to stunning waterfalls, but you must go with an experienced local guide and you should be in good physical condition. On the trails you will have a chance to see some of the rarest wild-

Giant anteater

life, which most package tours in the region simply cannot show you. You will be voyaging down waterways and trails that indigenous people traveled thousands of years before, including, it is thought, the legendary female warriors that the Spanish friar Gaspar de Carvajal wrote about in the first chronicles of this mysterious Central Amazonian region. Keep your eyes open: there is a legend that these mysterious "Amazons" hid treasures in the as yet undiscovered caves in the forest.

Where to Stay & Eat

Due to the limited number of visits here, make arrangements for lodging ahead of time with the travel agencies in Santarém or with the Tourism Secretariat listed above.

The Southern Region

Southern Brazil could almost be considered its own country. Distinct from the rest of Brazil in culture and geography, there are endless nuances within the region itself. Settled predominantly by Europeans and their descendants, there are reminders of Europe everywhere you go, including villas that seemed to have stepped right out of Bavaria. Close to Argentina and Uruguay, the region also shares come cultural ties with these countries. Social customs are more reserved than in other parts of Brazil, the cities tend to be more affluent and organized, and the climate itself is unusual in that it is more temperate and in fact the only place in the entire country where it can snow. The natural beauty of the landscape is renowned, especially in the Foz de Iguaçu region where the largest waterfalls in the Americas are found. From the coastal resort areas to the wooded inland with misty mountaintops, the Southern Region is filled with places that are often overlooked by international travelers. Each of the three states of the region (**Paraná**, **Santa Catarina**, and **Rio Grande do Sul**) has some basic similarities with its neighbors, but there are often staggering differences as well. Another benefit to the region is that overall public security is better than average here, and for people concerned about visiting South America because of what they read in the papers, this is a recommended destination.

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Tips for Exploring the Southern Region

The Southern Region is very hospitable. While more bucolic than the urbanized Southeast Region, the cities maintain a certain level of sophistication with generally good facilities for visitors, excellent restaurants and decent nightlife. Inland, the region is predominately rural, and it is here that much of Brazil's grain and livestock are produced. Getting to some destinations can be a little difficult because there are few international flights, but not for lack of adequate infrastructure – this is one of the most advanced regions of the country. Generally, you will have to fly through Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo to get here on a domestic airline. Or you can take a bus or even drive a car from these cities. The climate, because it is farther away from the equator, is much more temperate and there are woodlands rather than deserts or plains. In the winter the temperatures can be quite chilly, and even in the height of summer there is rarely the blazing heat commonly associated with other regions of Brazil. World famous **Foz do Iguaçu** is one of the top ecological destinations in Brazil, rivaling even the Amazon Rainforest for natural beauty. But, there is a lot to see and you should consider branching out if you have more than a few days. You might also think about renting a car. There are delightful discoveries around every bend in the road.

Wildlife Sanctuaries

- Arvoredo Marine Park in Santa Catarina

Natural Wonders

- Foz do Iguaçu in Paraná
- Serras Gaúchas in Rio Grande do Sul

Coastal Resorts

- Florianópolis in Santa Catarina
- Ilha do Mel in Paraná

Historical Adventures

- The Missions Zone in Rio Grande do Sul
- Island fortresses of Santa Catarina

Dining and Nightlife

- Curitiba in Paraná
- Florianópolis in Santa Catarina

Local Culture

- Gramado and Canela in Rio Grande do Sul
- The Vale dos Vinhedos of Rio Grande do Sul

Paraná

The state of Paraná is definitely "southern Brazil" in its culture and climate, but remains distinct from its neighbors, **Santa Catarina** and **Rio**

Grande do Sul. Though small, with only about 10 million total inhabitants, it maintains historical and cultural ties to the Southeast Region, seen especially in the modern capital city of **Curitiba**. The main reason to visit the state is to see the enormous waterfalls at **Foz do Iguaçu National Park**. But if you are interested in seeing part of Brazil that is often overlooked by international travelers, spending a day in Curitiba is worthwhile, as is exploring the rustic coastal isles, such as **Ilha do Mel**, listed here as a side-trip.

The state is very diverse ethnically, with strong influences from Europe, Asia and Africa as well as the indigenous Brazilian culture. Colonization began in the 16th century by Europeans in search of valuable wood to send back home, but the outposts did not begin to grow until much later. In the 17th century, Portuguese-Brazilian settlers from São Paulo arrived in search of indigenous slaves to work the gold mines of the Southeast Region that enriched the Portuguese empire, and they began a little mining here as well. By the 18th century, there were really only two cities: Curitiba and the port of Paranaguá. This former province of São Paulo only broke away in the mid-19th century with the heavy influx of European immigrants.

There are quite a few minor inland destinations that are beyond the scope of this book but you might check with some of the travel agencies in Curitiba or with the state tour board Paranatur for more information about them. Most of the state is very rural, with coffee plantations in the extreme north, ranching, and many different types of fruits, vegetables and row crops. The port of Paranaguá is the second-largest in Brazil.

Curitiba

- Modern Curitiba has great restaurants and quality of life
- Gateway to the famous Foz do Iguaçu National Park
- Take the historic train to Paranaguá or see lovely Ilha do Mel

Night view of Curitiba

Curitiba is a pleasant and modern city of two million people with good facilities. Here you can count on safe, clean streets lined with trees, efficient public transport, a friendly population, fine restaurants and nice lodging. It is a worthwhile stop if you plan an overnight on your way to **Foz do Iguaçu National Park**, one of the country's natural wonders. Or you might consider a rustic train ride down to the coast and on to the **Ilha de Mel** which is a popular getaway for locals but seldom visited by foreigners. There is a certain provincial charm to Curitiba, with definite European overtones, mostly German, Polish, and Italian. Curitiba has its own character quite unlike that of other cities in the Southern Region. These special qualities range from the sing-song local dialect to the eccentric artists and sites the city is famous for. Take the **Rua Vinte Quatro Horas** (24-Hour Street), for instance: an indoor mall with restaurants and shops that stays open all the time. Or visit the **Botanical Gardens** and the **Wire Opera House**. There are close to 30 parks and arboretums. If you like trees and flowers, the city claims to be the greenest in Brazil (as does João Pessoa in the Northeast Region).

Take note: Curitiba is well known for its rainy weather, fog, and chilly winters. Don't despair if the weather turns foul. Head indoors for some good eating, such as the local specialty, pine nut soup. The city has one of the largest restaurants in the world: the inexpensive **Madalosso** in the Italian district of Santa Felicidade. It seats 4,500 people.

How to Get Here

Curitiba has flights from major cities such as São Paulo or Rio de Janeiro. Getting around in town is a rare treat for Brazil. The streets are well marked and drivers are sane. In the downtown area there are some streets where only buses can circulate and others with brief sections where you drive on the left side of the road. If you don't want to drive, public transport is just fine, though you are advised to use taxis for convenience. During the day the cheapest and easiest way to get around is the tour bus line, which lets you get on and off at the main points (see *Sightseeing*, below).

When to Go

Be warned, the temperature can drop below 54°F/12°C in the winter months, which is next to arctic temperature for most Brazilians. From March to May it is not so cold and there is less rain but after that is when the cold sets in. The only time the city really gets busy is in March, when the **Curitiba Theater Festival** takes place and you need to make hotel reservations in advance. The schedule is always different so if you plan to go you have to get in touch with the local tour board. There is a minor literary festival in August called **Perhappiness**.

Sightseeing

Curitiba is a pleasant and safe place to look around for a day, and small enough to allow you to see most of the city in a short period of time. The best way to do it is to take the special **city-tour bus** (Linha Turismo)

Curitiba

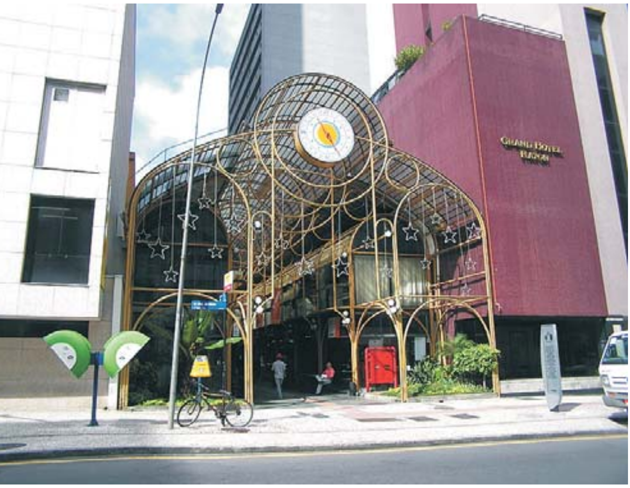
called a *jardineira*. This way you avoid wasting time. The 24-mile/40-km trip takes about two hours, passing two dozen sights, including the Santa Felicidade neighborhood, with its Italian immigrants, the historical district's old mansions, as well as the many public parks and squares. You get a ticket book with four tickets for about $5. That way you can get off the bus three times to look around and catch the next one, which comes every 30 minutes, from 9 am to 5 pm (closed Mondays). The terminus is at Praça Tiradentes in the center of town.

★The **Wire Opera House** (Opera de Arame) was built over a lake, entirely of iron bars, with a transparent glass overlay. The artistic lighting makes it a good place to visit at night. Next door the city's patron poet, Paulo Leminski, is remembered with a deactivated stone yard and artificial waterfall. It is at Rua João Gava in the Pilarzinho neighborhood. Open 8 am-10 pm every day but Monday, with occasional shows and events.

The Botanical Gardens (Alan Franco)

The **Botanical Gardens** (Jardim Botanico), on Avenida Lothario Meissner and Avenida Affonso Camargo, is a good place to stroll, with its lakes, botanical museum, a section of native forest, and the world-famous "crystal palace" greenhouse. The gardens are open Monday through Friday 8 am-6 pm.

★**Rua Vinte-Quatro (24) Horas** is a typical Curitibana creation – a glass-roofed structure of iron loops, housing bars, coffee-shops, ice-



Rua 24 Horas (Morio)

cream stores, gift-shops and antique dealers. A stylish place, this is where people of all ages gather at all hours, traditionally starting around nightfall. Rua Coronel Menna Barreto between Rua Visconde de Nacar and Rua Visconde do Rio Branco.

Rua das Flores (aka Rua 15 de Novembro) means the "street of flowers" and this is said to have been Brazil's first paved sidewalk. Curitiba's equivalent of New York's East Village, this is an artsy district with plenty of little shops and places to have a snack or coffee. There is a section called the Boca Maldita where students and poets make inflammatory political declarations to anyone who cares to listen, or simply to kick a ball around.

Where to Stay

The **Blue Tree Towers** ($$), on Avenida Sete de Setembro, 5190, is a fine choice close to downtown. ☎ 41-351-2222.

A smaller place with a jazz theme is the **Full Jazz Hotel** ($$), with occasional live music at its busy bar. It is at Rua Silveira Peixoto, 1297. ☎ 41-312-7000.

Another interesting old place (since reformed) is the **Braz** ($$), on Avenida Luiz Xavier, 67, where the dictator-turned-president Getulio Vargas once spoke to the masses from the balcony. The restaurant and bar are popular with locals.

Where to Eat

Curitiba is known for its restaurants, generally serving European-style cuisine with local accents such as pine nuts. The *rodizio*-style Brazilian steakhouses are a good option as well. One of the city's culinary landmarks is the inexpensive **Madalosso Velho** ($$) on Avenida Manoel Ribas, 5875, in the former Italian colony of Santa Felicidade. There is an identical restaurant, but newer, right across the street. The new one is the largest restaurant in the country, and looks like a castle. The food is Italian – try the wonderful fried polenta made from scratch or the house wine from Santa Catarina state. The food is served in *rodizio*, every day, all you can eat, and both restaurants usually have live music. Locals prefer a nearby Italian place called **Cantina Fadanelli** ($$) with famous pastas and 15 varieties of filet mignon. It's on the same street a few blocks away – Avenida Manoel Ribas, 5667 (☎ 41-373-1616). It closes Mondays.

The **Boulevard** ($$$) on Rua Voluntarios da Patria, 539, serves a mix of French and local styles, and is one of the best options in town, especially for its elaborate desserts. ☎ 41-224-8244. It closes on Sundays. **Durski** ($$$), on Rua Jaime Reis, 254, in the *Centro* neighborhood, is one of the only Ukranian restaurants in the country. On Tuesday and Wednesday there is a *rodizio*. ☎ 41-225-7893. The steakhouse called **Churrascaria Curitibana** ($$), on Avenida Iguacu, 1315, is open Monday through Saturday, serving specialty meats. ☎ 41-233-5287.

Haifa Café ($$) serves traditional Jewish cuisine. The best time to go is for lunch, Monday through Saturday. It's at Avenida Silva Jardim, 1509, in the Batel neighborhood. ☎ 41-223-1164. Nearby is the Middle Eastern **Areibian** ($$), on Alameda Presidente Taunay, 435. The buffet opens Monday through Saturday for lunch and dinner, and on Sunday for lunch. ☎ 41-224-2976. For Japanese food, **Taisho** ($$) has a busy *rodizio* with sushi, sashimi, and hot dishes, but you should make reservations on the weekends. Open daily. Avenida Iguaçu, 1836, in the Agua Verde neighborhood. ☎ 41-244-6659. For a calmer Japanese place, the **Tako** ($$), on Rua Silveira Peixoto, 777, in Agua Verde, is open Tuesday through Saturday for dinner and Sunday for lunch. ☎ 41-243-9522. A great bar and restaurant with occasional music and art expositions is called **Beto Batata**, on Rua Professor Brandão, 678. ☎ 41-262-0840.

What to Buy

Alma Curitibana has local arts and crafts of good quality. It is on Avenida Manoel Ribas, 6995, in the Santa Felicidade neighborhood (not far from the Madalosso Velho restaurant). ☎ 41-372-0220.

Side-Trips

★ Historic Train Ride to Paranaguá

There is a scenic and safe three-hour train ride from Curitiba down to the coast at Paranaguá through the **Serra do Mar** coastal highlands. Dating back to 1885, the railway passes through 13 tunnels carved into the granite and over nearly three dozen iron bridges. The trip offers a memorable view of waterfalls and the flower-filled landscape of rural Parana from a mountainside vantage-point. Along the way, you can stop if you want at **Morretes** and **Antonina**, two tiny rustic towns known for their culinary offerings.

At the end of the line is the port city of **Paranaguá**, the oldest in the state. Paranaguá is an interesting place to look around a little bit with historic mansions and architecture in the **Centro Historico**. This also a great place to eat. However, if you are going just for the ride and lunch,

Train from Curitiba to Paranaguá (Claus Bunks)

planning to return to Curitiba the same day, **Morretes** is a better choice. The weather tends to be warm and rainy during the summer with average temperatures of 90°F/32°C, so wear light clothes. During the winter, you will want something warmer. The trips include transfer from your hotel and the train station, plus lunch or dinner. Reservations are a good idea from around November to February, the peak summer season. Typically the trains leave daily at 8 am, returning from Paranagua at 6 pm. Note times are subject to change! Sometimes the train leaves Paranagua at 3 pm. The trip back takes about four hours.

The "Litorina," a more luxurious rail car (about $50 round-trip), leaves a little earlier or a little later depending on which direction you are headed. These romantic trips are provided by **Serra Verde Express** (☎ 41-323-4007), at Avenida Affonso Camargo, 330 in Curitiba. Check out their site at www.serraverdeexpress.com.br. Once you are in Paranaguá, you are close to the jumping-off point to Parana's hidden island jewel, called Ilha do Mel.

Paranaguá (Marcusrg)

★ Ilha do Mel

Ilha do Mel is one of a few small islands two hours off the coast of Paranaguá by boat. It is a five-minute walk from the Paranaguá train station to the boat. The boats (called *balsas*) leave twice daily, around 8 am and 5 pm. Check for schedules in Curitiba. If you want to shorten the journey over the water for some reason or miss your boat, you can take a bus to the town of Pontal do Sul until the last stop (tell your driver to let you off at *Porto de Embarque*), where balsas leave every hour for the half-hour trip. Ask at the train station for directions.

During the summer, this romantic getaway is a little slice of paradise where you can enjoy seldom-traveled beaches or watch dolphins swimming by. There are only four small villages and no cars – a bike is as motorized as it gets. The beautiful island also has the historic **Nossa Senhora de Prazeres fortress**, built in 1776 by the Portuguese to protect its southern colonies from incursions by rivals. Or you can discover the rocky sea grotto called **Encantadas** (close to Praia da Fora beach), the legendary home of a mermaid. Expect only rustic meals and lodging on the island, but exceptional natural beauty. The better beaches are on the eastern side, and most are practically deserted except for the summer holiday periods (New Year's Eve and Carnival).

There are a dozen or so very basic *pousadas* on the island, mostly around the beach called Encantadas. One of the best is **Estrela do Mar** ($$), an environmentally friendly place and quite comfortable. ☎ 41-3426-9013 or 41-9978-2010. As you might imagine, fresh sea-food is your best bet. Try the *lagosta* (lobster), a local specialty. You can eat at the Estrela do Mar or at various bars and restaurants that are easy to locate near **Encantadas**, at the southernmost tip of the island. Another option is **Nova Brasília** (about two hours on foot from Encantadas).

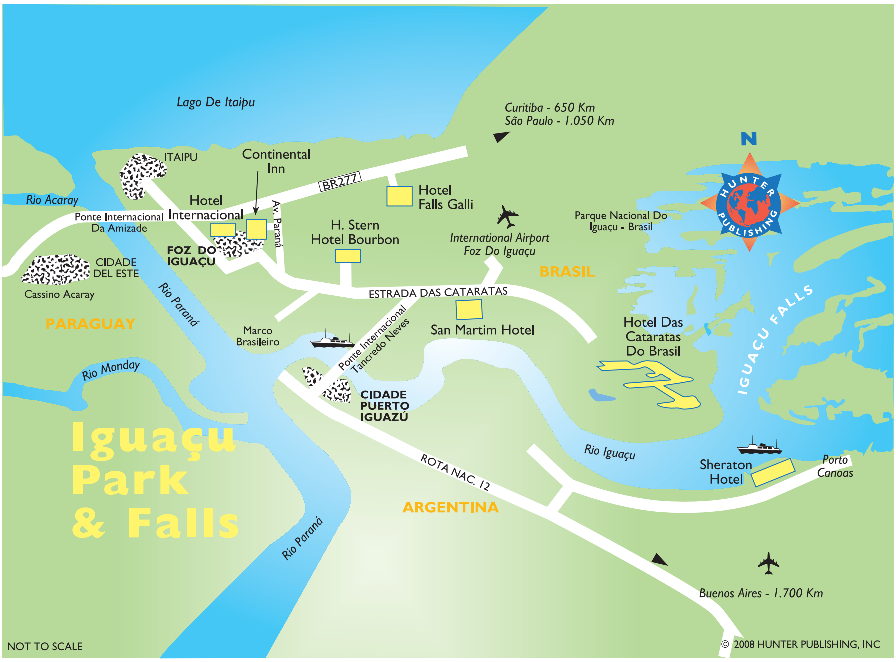
Note: There is very little illumination on the island – a flashlight is recommended at night, and be careful wandering off to avoid getting lost. Also, there are no banks on the island. Bring local currency. If you get stuck, you might trade dollars at one of the busier establishments on the island, but expect to get shafted on the rate.

Foz do Iguaçu National Park

- See the falls made famous in the 1986 film *The Mission*
- Explore trails and hikes along rivers and into the forest
- Keep your eyes open for the reclusive and magnificent jaguar

The famous waterfalls at Foz do Iguaçu National Park are considered one of the four main ecological wonders in Brazil. The region, known for its immense natural beauty and wildlife of the southern Atlantic rainforest, is adjacent to the so-called "triple border" with Argentina and Paraguay, allowing you to visit both countries. The star attraction is the great thundering falls that drift from the green forest canopy over stark rock walls into the mysterious riverways of the Prata Basin. But, there are also many hikes and trails that are worth exploring after you see the falls up-close.

The adventures are not necessarily rugged, but there are some more challenging trips if you are so inclined. In addition to the overland adventures, you can enjoy rafting trips and panoramic flights. The park covers 42 sq miles/107 sq km and is absolutely breathtaking. A visit is highly recommended for everyone. While there is a lot here, because the services are well organized, you can see it all in two or three days at the most.


Lago De Itaipu
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São Paulo - 1.050 Km
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ESTRADA DAS CATARATAS
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Rio Monday
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ARGENTINA
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History & Geology

Macaws

The region's striking terrain dates back hundreds of millions of years, when volcanic activity related to the drifting of the South American continent away from Africa formed thick layers of basalt. Over time, the water erosion exposed these layers and the more ancient landforms underneath. While long inhabited by indigenous Guarani groups, the Spanish conquistador Cabeza de Vaca arrived here in 1542 and soon the Jesuits came to open missions. Later, in the middle of the 18th century, incursions from the Portuguese settlements to the north, especially the *Bandeirante* adventurer-slavers from São Paulo, destroyed these missions and most of the indigenous population in an effort to drive out their rivals. This episode in history was the subject of the 1986 film *The Mission*, directed by Roland Joffe. Not by coincidence the same year the region was declared a Heritage of Humanity site by UNESCO. If you saw the film and always wanted to visit the region, here is your chance.

Jaguar

The indigenous tribes had a legend about the place that a beautiful young woman, Naipi, was consecrated to the powerful snake god Mboi. But, the warrior Taroba broke the taboo and ran off with her as his lover. When Mboi learned of this he became enraged and burrowed into the earth, creating the valley where the falls are located. He turned Naipi into a rock, forever punished by the falling waters, and Taroba was made into a palm tree, looking down upon her.

Wildlife & Ecology

Cayman

It is difficult to describe in words the misty forest or the sounds of the water coursing through the riverways of the Prata, Paraguay, and Paraná fluvial systems. After the war between the Spanish and Portuguese for supremacy in the region, the region became virtually uninhabited and returned to its natural state. Even today, it is still very well preserved with careful international attention paid to protecting the wildlife. The park itself dates from the 1940s but that did not stop settlers from moving in and setting up farms. But, on the Brazilian side at least, the region was never systematically hacked down, as were other sections of the Atlantic rainforest.

The rainy season is from October to March. It fills up the rivers and makes the falls even more spectacular. There is a striking difference in the relief of the terrain, caused by millions of years of erosion. At the lower altitudes the forest is deciduous, losing its vegetation during the winter season. Near the rivers there are wetland forests that stay green all year, as do the pine forests at higher altitudes. For this reason, there is great biodiversity. Note, during the summer months (the North American winter), temperatures can climb to 104°F/40°C, and under the falls there is nearly 100% relative humidity, so be prepared! During the spring and fall, the temperatures are 74°F/23°C on average, and during the winter they drop to a chilly 46°F/8°C.

Some of the most interesting creatures, such as jaguars and ocelots, are extremely shy and you may not see them probably unless you go deeper into the forest. You will likely see otters playing in the rivers, different kinds of rodents, the unusual coati (it looks something such as a raccoon) scouting for snacks, sloths, small wild pigs, butterflies and an incredible variety of birds, including toucans.

Getting There & Getting Around

Generally the easiest way to get here is to fly from **Curitiba**. There is a small but efficient **international airport** (☎ 45-521-4200) nine miles/15 km from downtown on Avenida das Cataratas (and close to the park), with direct flights to the main cities of the region. You can also drive to Foz do Iguaçu from Curitiba (where you can rent a car) by taking Federal Highway BR-277.

From town, you can take BR-469 another 12 miles/20 km into the park. If you are coming from Paraguay, take Ruta 007 or from Argentina, Ruta 12. Overland, by bus is probably more convenient for most travelers and you have several options daily from Curitiba or other nearby cities. The **bus station** (☎ 45-522-2590) is at Avenida Presidente Costa e Silva (at the 5 Km mark from town). Hours are 5 am-10:30 pm every day. A **taxi** from the town of Foz do Iguaçu to the park will cost about $15, or you can take the bus marked Parque Nacional. A **rental car** is a good option as well. **Localiza** is recommended (☎ 800-992-020).

The park receives close to a million visitors per year, and has very good overall infrastructure. There is a modest entry fee of a few dollars. As with many other places in Brazil, some establishments in Foz do Iguaçu (including the park itself!) believe it is fair game to exploit foreigners by charging more money for the exact same services. If they try this at the hotels, you can usually get the lower "non-gringo" rate by reminding them that the Brazilian constitution prohibits any kind of discrimination based on national origin, including charging a different price. Despite this nuisance, Foz do Iguaçu is a far cry from other parks in Brazil that have virtually no facilities for visitors at all, much less decent roads. The park offices have a visitor center with phones, storage lockers useful for backpackers, bathrooms, restaurant and snack bar, a drug store, information booth, a cultural space and even a cash machine. In town, there are more ample services, including lodging, restaurants and information booths. English and Spanish are widely spoken. Energy here is 110 volts, but check at your hotel, just to be sure.

When to Go

The park is open year-round during daylight hours. It does get cold here in the winter, and is rainy during the spring and summer months of October to about March. That can make it harder to access some of the trails and requires rain gear and a little patience. The upside of the rainy season is that it fills the river basin and brings the falls to life.

Travel Services

The Falls

If you need to trade cash there is a **Banco do Brasil** that operates at the airport. There are some package tour operators that provide a cost-effective way to see everything and can make it easier for you, even though going solo is not difficult here. You might also look into some of the minor destinations in the surrounding areas. **Topictur** (☎ 45-523-4308) is at Rua Jorge Sanwis, 664 (Sala 8), and their website is www.topictur.com.br. Also recommended is **Macuco Safari** (☎ 45-574-4244), which runs rafting trips and alternative**(Rephrase. Means nothing to reader) trails in the region. They are on Avenida das Cataratas, at the 25 Km marker in the park. Their website is www.macucosafari.com.br.

If you plan a river or lake trip, note that embarking on the Rio Iguaçu or the Rio Paraná is from **Porto Meira**, on Avenida General Meira, about eight miles/13 km from town. To embark on the Itaipu Lake, there is a tourist terminal at **Tres Lagoas**, on Avenida João Ricieri Maran, 12 miles/20 km from town. The latter has parking, phones, a snack bar and even campgrounds.

For More Information

The local state government is well organized, with helpful tourist services at the airport, bus station and park offices. The Tourism Secretariat itself is at Praça Getulio Vargas, 69 (☎ 800-45-1516, toll free with English spoken, but only within Brazil). For photos and general information, try www.fozdoiguacu.pr.gov.br/turismo, or www.cataratasdoiguacu.com.br. For information on the Argentine side, see www.iguazuargentina.com.

Adventures in Foz do Iguaçu

★★★The Iguaçu Falls (Cataratas)

Iguaçu Falls

At the park entrance everybody gets on a bus that takes you to the platform, with 1.8 miles/three km of elevated walkways below the falls. "Iguaçu" means "big waters" in the Tupi-Guarani language, and this is an appropriate name. The Cataratas include about 275 individual waterfalls, counting both the Argentine and Brazilian sections. Together, they represent the world's largest falls, based on the amount of water falling at any given time. There are places to stop for a snack or beverage along the way. You might want to bring a raincoat as it can get wet, even though you are a good distance from the falls themselves. One of the most interesting sections of the walkway is under the Garganta do Diabo, at the junction of the V-shaped canyon walls. There you can actually feel the tremendous force of the water crashing down. At the end of the walkway is the Porto Canoas, which is a modern overlook built of metal, with elevators to the upper deck and a panoramic view of the Floriano falls. Stop here for a lunch buffet at the huge restaurant. You will see coatis rummaging for scraps and handouts.

★★★Macuco Safari

The **Macuco Safari** (☎ 45-574-4244) is the best way to see the park besides the walkways under the falls. Macuco, by the way, is the name of an endangered bird native to the region. To get there tell the park bus driver to let you off at the entrance. The safari starts on an elec-

The Macuco Safari

tric tram with information in English, Spanish and Portuguese. The tram follows a 1.8-mile/three-km trail and takes groups of up to 24 people, with stops to explain the native birds and wildlife typical of the subtropical river forest region. Then there is an optional trail up an outdoor staircase to a waterfall called Salto Macuco. Finally, you board a hard-hulled inflatable raft on the Rio Iguacu and take a water-level look at the magnificent falls up-close.

There is a good chance you will be drenched, so take special care with photographic equipment, binoculars, or anything else you'd like to keep dry.

The trip takes about an hour and 45 minutes. The start of the trail is four miles/seven km from the Visitor Center, where tickets are sold. The safari costs a little under $40 per person and is well worth it.

★Poço Preto

Another local attraction worth checking out is the **Poço Preto** trip that includes 5.4 miles/nine km of trails through the park on foot or bicycle. At the end of the trail there is a boat that takes you on the Rio Iguaçu to see the islands in the river. The trip takes five hours and costs about $50. For information, ☎ 54-574-4244.

★Parque das Aves

If you like wildlife, the **Parque das Aves** is about 300 yards from the park entrance on Rodovia das Cataratas. Intended as a shelter for birds, the forest park has over 180 species from all over the world in enclosures you can walk through. Some of the birds are tame and will even land on your shoulder. Especially interesting is the butterfly house with dozens of different colorful varieties. It costs about $7 to get in. Open daily from 8:30 am to 6:30 pm. ☎ 45-529-8282, www.parquedasaves.com.br.

Macaw

Itaipu Hydroelectric Dam

The second-largest hydroelectric plant in the world after China's Three Gorges, **Usina de Itaipu**, run by Brazil and Paraguay, supplies 25% of

Brazil's electricity. The plant is trying to show it is environmentally friendly by means of an ecological reserve and museum. During the day you can visit the museum and at night there is a light and sound show that is fairly impressive. The visit takes about three hours. It is not far from the Buddhist temple, at the far end of Avenida Tancredo Neves.

Adventures in the Air

Brazil's famed and eccentric aviator Santos Dumont was an admirer of the region and his presence here in 1916 was one of the first real efforts to protect the native beauty. He would have enjoyed these adventures. Scenic over-flights take about 10 minutes and let you see the falls and the Itaipu hydroelectric dam. A longer option of about 35 minutes flies over the triple border region. Recent prices were $60 for the short trip and $180 for the long one, with slight discounts for groups. Contact **Helisul Taxi Aereo** on the Cataratas Highway at the 16½ Km marker. ☎ 45-523-1190, 45-523-8387 or 45-523-2774. There is also flight school for motorized hang-gliding called **Weekend Fly**. Their office is on Rua Marechal Deodoro 1349, in Foz do Iguaçu. The hangar is at Avenida Joao Ricieri Maran in Tres Lagoas. Reservations are required for a flight. See their website at www.weekendfly.com.br or call ☎ 54-572-2412 (information available in English).

Cultural Adventures

The triple border

The triple border region is one of the most culturally diverse zones in the world. The region has, for example, the largest **Buddhist temple** (☎ 45-524-5566) in South America, welcoming visitors Wednesday through Sunday from 10 am to 5 pm, at Rua Aluisio Ferreira de Souza, 99 (6.6 miles/11 km from town). There is also a large Islamic community here, and the **Omar Ibn Al-Khatab mosque**, built in 1983, is known for its beauty (☎ 800-34-1516). There is an obelisk painted yellow and green marking the **triple border** in Brazil, with a scenic overlook. Paraguay and Argentina have similar obelisks painted in their national colors. Access is by Avenida General Meira (no number) 3.6 miles/six km from town. Open 9 am to 6 pm during the summer months, with snack bar and souvenir shop. ☎ 800-45-1516.

Where to Stay

Since you've come this far, you may want to stay in a more secluded area where you can enjoy the local scenery. If you prefer to stay in town, there are plenty of options available. Check with the local tour board offices. Following are some of the best.

The **Tropical das Cataratas** ($$$$) is the only resort in the park. This is where heads of state stay on official visits. Their site is www.tropicalhotel.com.br.

Tropical das Cataratas

Bourbon Cataratas Resort ($$$) is on Rodovia das Cataratas at the 2½ Km marker, also very high quality though a bit more distant from the park. ☎ 45-529-0123, www.bourbon.com.br.

In the city itself, the **Hotel Internacional Foz** ($$$) is highly recommended. It offers more urban amenities, such as its "disco club." ☎ 45-2102-4100.

Bourbon Cataratas

The Colonial-style **Hotel San Juan** ($$) is the best for the money, on Rodovia das Cataratas at the 6 Km marker. ☎ 45-529-8811, www.sanjuanhotels.com.br.

If you enjoy golf the **Iguassu Golf Club & Resort** ($$$) on Avenida das Cataratas, 6845 (near the 7 Km mark) has an 18-hole course in a scenic location. You can play as well if you are not a guest. ☎ 45-529-9999, www.iguassugolf.com.br.

The simple but scenic **Hotel Bristol Carima** ($$) is a well-serviced older hotel on Rodovia das Cataratas at the 10½ Km mark. ☎ 45-529-7000, www.carima.com.br.

Iguassu Golf Club & Resort

Where to Eat

The hotels generally include breakfast and have kitchen service. There is a restaurant at the park itself, which is where you should have lunch after seeing the falls. For going out in general, the **Boulevard Igaussu** on Rodovia das Cataratas 1,118 (about 1.2 miles/two km from town) is open weekdays from 5 pm and on weekends and holidays from 3 pm. Here you can find bowling alleys, cinema, a night club, Internet service, and a food court (including a place that serves cold draft beer). Grilled meats are the local specialty. Try **Bufalo Branco** ($$) at Rua Eng. Rebouças, 530, for a *rodizio*-style all-you-can eat grill for lunch and dinner, considered the best in town. Fish is another good option at **Zarazoga** ($$$) on Rua Quintino Bocaiuva, 882. Open for lunch and dinner. Credit cards are accepted at both places, so they say.

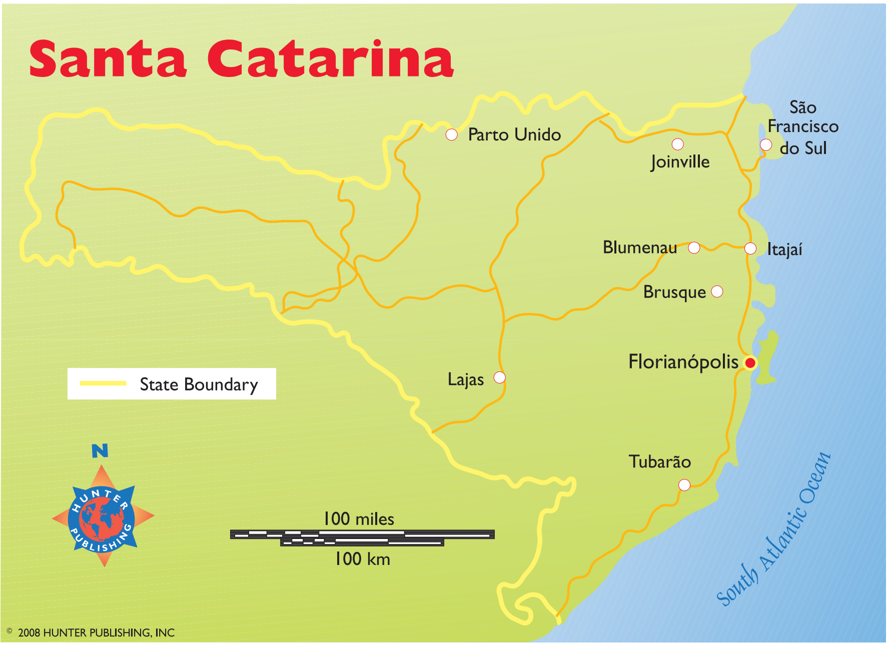
What to Buy

Ciudad de Leste

Brazilians love to cross over the so-called "friendship bridge" to shop the town of Ciudad de Leste in Paraguay. Up until recently it had virtually no border control beyond a customs office set up to catch as many Brazilians as possible coming back with undeclared imports. This is because of the heavy taxes Brazil tags onto virtually everything. This trade in black market Paraguayan goods (given the intriguing name "*muamba*") is a tradition. It is not at all uncommon for locals to stock up with thousands of dollars worth of cheap digital cameras, whiskey, perfumes, and other goods, then sneak them past customs for re-sale in Brazil. Be warned that doing this, besides not being very cost effective for Americans or Europeans, can lead to forfeiture of your goods. The limit on duty free purchases is $150, with a 50% surcharge over any excess amount. You can get some great deals here, but not all the shops have a sterling reputation – caveat emptor! The bridge is about 4.2 miles/seven km from downtown Foz do Iguaçu.

Santa Catarina

The southern state of Santa Catarina has an attractive coastline with plenty of culture and history. As in the other states of the region, there are very good facilities to make your trip more comfortable, and there's plenty to do outdoors. The best time to visit is during the South American summer months when the dune-filled beaches draw visitors from around the world. The capital city **Florianopolis**, partly on an island, has a huge number of beaches, while the entire coast is worth exploring if you have a few days. Settled in the 19th century by immigrants from Italy and Germany, the state is affluent, with a predominately rural economy. The capital city is modern with a decent number of options for dining and nightlife. The average annual temperature here is temperate at about 61°F/16°C, with a rainy season in January and February when temperatures soar to around 86°F/30°C and people flock to the coast. Visitors are often pleasantly surprised by what they find and not uncommonly want to move here after a few short days in this coastal paradise!


Santa Catarina
Parto Unido
Joinville
São Francisco do Sul
Blumenau
Itajaí
Brusque
Florianópolis
Lajas
Tubarão
State Boundary
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100 miles
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South Atlantic Ocean
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Florianópolis

- Visit the quaint Colonial city where settlers from the Azores made their home
- Enjoy fresh oysters and sea food, or take home an example of local lace
- The coast has excellent diving, surfing and windsurfing with amazing beaches

Florianópolis has been called a "mini Rio de Janeiro" and the description is fitting. While a lot sleepier, Floripa, as the former fishing village is affectionately known by locals, has dozens of spectacular beaches and an active nightlife. This laid back and affluent city of the south is spread out over the mainland and an island, called Isla de Santa Catarina. One of the striking characteristics, besides the natural beauty, is its strong link to the Colonial past. It was settled in the 1700s by immigrants from

Hercílio Luz suspension bridge

the Portuguese isles of the Azores, and locals still have a charming accent. Another unique feature of Floripa is the enormous **Hercílio Luz suspension bridge** built in 1926, one of the largest in the world. There are some interesting historical sites to check such as fortresses and Colonial buildings with their architecture still preserved, but the real highlight here is the ocean and the beaches. You can go diving in the **Arvoredo marine park**, windsurfing, dune-surfing like the locals, or just catch some rays and enjoy the view. In the summer it gets hot here, but it can also rain for days on end. Refresh yourself with the many varieties of excellent local seafood or enjoy the hip bars around the Lagoa de Conceição lagoon.

How To Get Here

There are connecting flights from major cities such as Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. The **Hercílio Luz Airport** is at Avenida Deputado Diomício Freitas, 3393, in Carianos. ☎ 48-3331-4000.

Getting Around

To enjoy all Floripa has to offer you really need to rent a car. The attractions are widely dispersed and public transport does not serve all the areas. It is not a hard city to get around in. Do watch for the radar speed traps to avoid a nasty fine when you turn in the car. Also, the parts of town close to the beaches turn into a traffic nightmare during the summer, and it makes sense to group your activities in a single area. That way, you avoid wasting an hour or two in traffic. Try **Hertz** at Rua Bocaiúva, 2125, in the Centro or at the airport (☎ 48-3224-9955). Or try **Locaruta**, which is cheaper, at Rua Silva Jardim, 816, near the convention center or at the airport (☎ 48-3225-9000). Florianopolis, like the other cities of the Southern Region tends to have above average public security. The northern part of the island is more urban.

For More Information

There is some basic information available at the local tour board, called **Santur**. Their website is www.santur.sc.gov.br, and you can visit their information booth at the airport. You might consider local travel guide services to help you get around, purchase tickets and otherwise make your trip a little easier. **Itaguatur Turismo** is at Rua Felipe Schmidt, 515, in the Centro (☎ 48-3225-3939), or try **Alman** on Rua Conselheiro Mafra, 220 (sala 705), also in the Centro (☎ 48-3025-4060). **Brazil Trails** (☎ 48-3233-1287) is a guide service specializing in ecotourism and outdoor sports. They can show you hidden trails on the island leading to deserted beaches. They also offer other activities such as mountain biking, horseback riding, and rafting. Their website is www.braziltrails.com, where you can get more information and photos.

Sightseeing

★Mercado Público

Built in 1898, this old Colonial public market is a good example of Azorean architecture. The busy market today is filled with stalls that sell food, clothing and crafts, attracting locals as well as visitors to town. There are some bars that stay open a bit later and on Saturdays there is generally a gathering of local musicians free for all to enjoy. This is at Rua Joaquim Coelho in the *Centro*, it open Monday through Saturday.

Florianópolis Historic Center *(Fernando Dall'Acqua)*

Colonial Warehouse

The so-called "prédio da alfândega" was built in 1875 and today houses an arts and crafts gallery that is worth a visit. There is an artists association on site with occasional displays as well as lots of things for sale and a bar on the first floor. Near the Mercado Público at Rua Conselheiro Mafra, 141, in the Centro. Open Monday through Friday and till noon on Saturday.

Historic Fortresses

If you like poking around historical forts, Floripa has several you can visit. They periodically close for visits so check ahead. ☎ 48-3331-6714.

The fortresses were built by the Portuguese to discourage Spain from attempting to seize the island. In 1777, the Spanish took over anyway and only returned the island when Portugal promised never to use it as a naval base. **Santa Cruz de Anhatomirim** dates from 1744, and is accessed by boat (see *Boat Excursions*, below). **São José da Ponta Grossa**, from the same period, has local artisans selling their wares. It is on Praia do Forte, at the 25 Km marker. **Santo Antônio de Ratones** also dates from the same period and has trails you can explore. It is seen as part of the boat excursions as well.

Museums

There are some minor museums in town. The former residence of contemporary local artist Eli Heil has a large collection of canvas and sculpture artworks that is worth a look, called **O Mundo Ovo de Eli Heil**. Visits should be scheduled in advance (☎ 48-3235-1076). It is at State Highway SC-401 number 7079. You might also enjoy the arts center **CIC** (Centro Integrado de Cultura), which houses the **Santa Catarina Art Museum** at Avenida Gov. Irineu Bornhausen, 5600. ☎ 48-3212-2300.

Adventures on the Water

★★★Beaches

Ilha Armação *(Herbert Valtere)*

With over a 100 beaches, it would be difficult to describe them all. However, several do stand out as particularly worth mentioning. **Jururê** has low surf and is popular with windsurfers. **Canasvieras** is fairly busy and close to the urban areas and nightlife. **Moçambique**, also called **Praia Grande**, is several miles long and the largest on the island, with dunes. **Mole** is the site of surfing championships and where the beautiful people go to see and be seen. The northern side tends to be a “gay beach.” **Joaquina** has strong surf and is famous for its dune-surfing nearby (just slide down on a board!). **Campeche** is more isolated, with strong surf. **Armação** has a fishing village and a section where you can surf. There are countless others, so feel free to ask around or explore the coast to find one you like.

★Boat Excursions

Scuna Sul (☎ 48-3225-1806 or 48-3225-4425) has seven different boats offering day-trips around Floripa, the nearby islands and the coast. The trips cost about $10 per person. The trips to **Ilha de Anhatomirim** or to **Ilha de Ratones** let you explore the historic fortresses and observe the dolphins on the south bay (see *Sightseeing*, above).

Note: Bring money for lunch and entrance to the forts!

Ilha do Campeche is for nature lovers, where you can spend your day on an unspoiled island with green trails and white sand beaches (you must be accompanied by a guide), reminiscent of the Caribbean. Also on the island are indigenous inscriptions thousands of years old. Other trips are available. There are photos on www.scunasul.com.br.

★Scuba Diving

The **Arvoredo Archipelago** includes one of three marine wildlife preserves in Brazil, called **Reserva do Arvoredo**. From time to time the authorities shut it down to divers, so always check ahead before planning your trip. You can go pretty much year-round, with better visibility and temperatures in the Brazilian summer.

Conditions here can be choppy, depending on the season, and visibility varies from 30-60 feet/10-20 m on average. There are both basic and intermediate dives here to about 80 feet/24 m. Water temperatures range from 66-77°F/19-25°C, with a significant thermocline on the deeper dives.

The archipelago includes several islands (off-limits to foot travel) with dive points about five miles from the Ilha de Santa Catarina. There is a great variety of sea life, including some very rare species due to the cold water currents from the Falkland Islands, bringing plankton for the entire food chain. You are not allowed to touch any wildlife or take anything out.

For dive operators you have several options. Try **Sea Divers** (☎ 48-3284-1535), a PADI 5-star dive center on Avenida Luiz Boiteux Piazza, 6562, or **Parcel**, another PADI-certified operator, on Avenida Luiz Boiteux Piazza, 2243 (☎ 48-3284-5564), both on the north side of the island. There are departures in the morning and early afternoon. Expect to spend about $50 for a two-tank dive with full equipment rentals. Sometimes they will provide ground transfer from your hotel at no extra charge.

Rafting

Not far from Floripa you can go rafting on the Rio Cubatão do Sul. The levels range from beginning to advanced, and this is turning into a major sport for the region. For details get in touch with **TDA Rafting & Expedições** on Rodovia Princesa Leopoldina, 68, in Caldas da Imperatriz, 18 miles/30 km from town. ☎ 48-3245-7279, tda@trekkingdasaguas.com.br.

★★Surfing

Joaquina Surfing Beach *(Felipe Micaroni Lalli)*

Santa Catarina is famous for its surf and frequently hosts championships. Curls are from three to five feet year-round, reaching up to 10 feet at some times of year. Local lore is that the mildest waves are at Armação and Ingleses beaches. Brava beach has left and right breakers with waves up to eight feet, depending on the season (though it can be flat). Santinho is also considered one of the best, with higher surf. Both are on the north side of the island. On the south side, you can surf at Campeche. **Joaquina** is one of the beaches that offers the best tourist facilities, receiving a large number of tourists from around Brazil and the world. You can rent boards, find out conditions or get suggestions for surfing beaches from **Escolinha de Surf Evandro Santos** at Rua Santos Reis, 88, in Barra da Lagoa (☎ 48-3232-7753, atendimento@escolinhadesurf.com) or at **Praia Mole Surf Club** (☎ 48-9991-3535).

★Windsurfing

Florianopolis is one of the best places for windsurfing in Brazil because of the good wind and wide variety of locations. You can even take a windsurfing course at the Lagoa da Conceição lagoon or rent boards for about $15 per hour from **Escola Open Winds**. ☎ 48-3232-5004. The calmest ocean conditions are at the beaches of Jurerê, Ponta das Canas and Canasvieras. If you like waves, try the beaches of Campeche and Moçambique.

Adventures in the Air

Paragliding & Parasailing

Take advantage of the generous wind! A tandem paragliding flight with an instructor costs about $50, including equipment and transportation. The flights last 20 minutes, jumping off from Santo Amaro da Imperatriz. For parasailing, you leave from the beach. Get in touch with Parapente Sul, on Rua João Antonio da Silveira, 201. ☎ 48-3232-0791.

Where to Stay

Costão do Santinho

Costão do Santinho ($$$$$) is one of Brazil's better luxury resorts. Here you can count on excellent service and a wide variety of activities, such as surfing, kayaking and tennis. There are trails and a series of indoor and outdoor pools and saunas. It is a tasteful place. ☎ 48-3261-1000, www.costao.com.

Jurerê Beach Village ($$$), at Praia de Jurerê, is one of the better known luxury hotels, with full leisure options. ☎ 48-3269-1414.

Jurerê Beach Village

Pousada do Vigia ($$$) a really good place, small and very private, over a small cliff on the north side of Floripa. The beach is called Lagoinha and it is very close to another good surfing beach, Praia Brava. ☎ 48-3284-1789, www.pousadadovigia.com.br.

Hotel Costa Norte ($$$) is scenic and on the Praia dos Ingleses. ☎ 48-3269-1305.

Pousada Villa del Sol y Mar is at Praia de Jurere. www.villasdelmar.com.br.

Pousada das Palmeiras ($$$) is at Lagoa da Conceicao. ☎ 48-3232-6267, www.pousadadaspalmeiras.com.br.

Hotel Saint Germain ($$), at Lagoa da Conceicao, is a pleasant spot. ☎ 48-3232-0550, www.hotelsaintgermain.com.br.

Pousada Vila Tamarindo Inn ($$) is a place where you sleep with the sound of the waves and wake up with the chirping of birds, at Campeche Beach. ☎ 48-3237-3464, www.tamarindo.com.br.

Pousada Vila Tamarindo Inn

Where to Eat

Oysters from the cold local waters are some of the best in Brazil. Here they are served with lime. You might also want to try the typical Azorean dish "*cambira*", which is sun-dried smoked fish fried in olive oil just prior to serving with lime. The best places tend to be near the Lagoa de Conceição. **Chef Fedoca** ($$$) is highly recommended for seafood, with a view of the lagoon, on Rua Senador Ivo D'Aquino Neto, 133, at the Marina on Lagoa de Conceição. The portions are big – try the various *moquecas* (fish stew). Open every day but Monday for lunch and dinner (☎ 48-2232-0759).

A well-known French-Italian place is **Boulevard** ($$$), with a wine list of some repute. in the Centro at Rua Voluntários, 539 (☎ 48-2224-8244). For reasonably good Japanese food, try **Sushi Yama** ($$$) at Rua Laurindo Januário da Silveira, 68, on the Lagoa, open every day (☎ 48-2232-8612). There is a good Italian place, also on the Lagoa, called **Villa Maggioni** ($$$$), at Rua Canto da Amizade, 273. Open Wednesday through Sunday (☎ 48-3232-6859). For a delicious pizza head to **Pizzaria San Francesco** on Rua São Franciso, 190, in the Centro (☎ 48-3222-7400).

Bistro d'Acampora ($$$$) is a house that has been converted into a restaurant and art gallery. Here you can hang out for drinks in a very elegant and comfortable spot, while enjoying a specially prepared menu that varies often. Highway SC-401at the 10 Km mark (near Canasvieras). You may want to make reservations on the weekend, especially in the summer months (☎ 48-2235-1073). For drinks and snacks around happy hour, try the fun **Botequim** ($$at) Avenida Rio Branco, 632, on the Lagoa (☎ 48-3333-1234). At the **Mercado Público** don't miss **Box 32** ($). Yes, that's its name. It's a stall that is constantly busy and serves famous snacks with a good house *cachaça* and ice cold beer. At night, there are lots of bars around the Lagoa that tend to draw crowds of young people. **Latitude 27**, on the Lagoa da Conceição, has live music and a nice crowd. It is on the Estrada Gerald da Barra da Lagoa, 565 (between Lagoa and Praia Mole). ☎ 48-3232-5841. **Confraria das Artes** is a nightclub and antiques store at Rua Pacheco da Costa, 31, on the Lagoa. See their website at www.confrariadasartes.com. For nightlife downtown, try **Cachacaria da Ilha** on Avenida Osmar Cunha, 164 (Centro). ☎ 48-3224-0051.

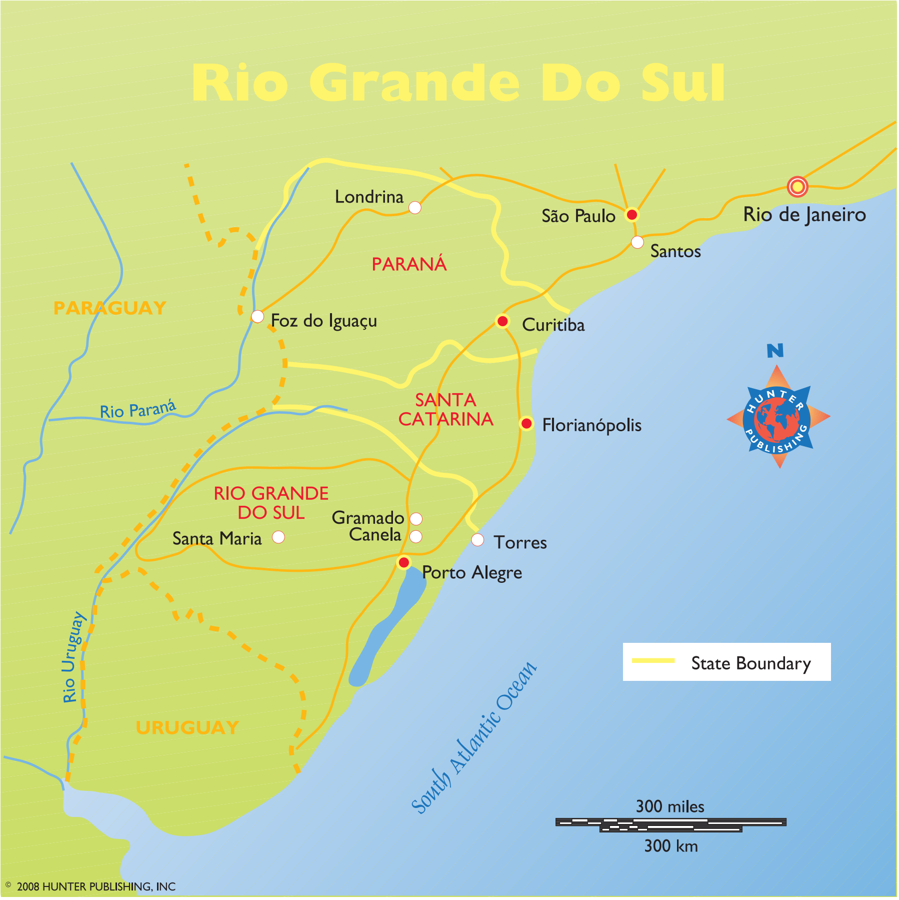
What to Buy

There is a long tradition of artistry here brought by the settlers from the Azores. The most famous local craft is hand-made lace, which is expensive but worth it. Many other items are worth a look as well, such as ceramics, dolls made out of straw, and textiles. The best place to look for arts and crafts in general is the historic district (Mercado Público and Colonial Warehouse – see *Sightseeing* above for details). Along the Lagoa de Conceição, there is a row of tiny houses where lace is made in the traditional Azorean way and sold, called Avenida das Rendeiras. It pays to shop around for the best prices.

Rio Grande do Sul

Rio Grande do Sul at the southernmost tip of Brazil is rich with folklore and natural beauty. Peopled by the descendents of immigrants from Europe and the Azores, the state has distinct regional customs such as the strong hot tea called *chimarrão*, drunk from a gourd with a silver straw. It is just as famous for the huge open-pit barbecues that date back to the days of the Spanish cattle drivers who first settled the *pampas*. Even today, it is as common to hear Spanish as Portuguese in the capital city, Porto Alegre. This unique mix of cultures reflects Spain's competition with Portugal to claim the New World. Spanish Jesuits opened missions in 11 locales which can be visited today in the **Missions Zone**, an international historical preservation area sanctioned by UNESCO. The mission period lasted until the 19th century when Portuguese adventurers called *Bandeirantes* spread southward from São Paulo and drove out the Jesuits, decimating the indigenous population along the way.

Apart from the intriguing architecture here, you will find stunning natural beauty. The coastal region is a balmy resort area with rocky crags over the ocean, very popular in the summer. Heading inland, there is the remarkable **Região da Serra** or the **Serra Gaucha** highlands, both famous for their natural beauty. These wooded highlands have immense canyons and basaltic river valleys, considered one of best options for outdoor travel in South America. The greatest canyon in the entire continent is here. It rivals Arizona's Grand Canyon National Monument, with its two joined national parks, **Serra Geral** and **Aparados da Serra**. Areas such as the **Lagoa do Peixe** are a little harder to reach,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Florianópolis
RIO GRANDE DO SUL
Gramado
Canela
Santa Maria
Torres
Porto Alegre
Rio Uruguay
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300 miles
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but they give you the opportunity to see local wildlife, including sea lions and marine birds.

If you prefer cultural sightseeing to the great outdoors, the charming Colonial towns of **Gramado**, **Canela** and **São Francisco de Paula** are recommended, especially during the Gramado film festival each August. For eating and drinking, be sure to visit blessed **Bento Gonçalves** and its sister city **Caxias do Sul** – famous for their local wines and rustic taverns, one of the best regions in Brazil for culinary tourism. The equivalent of California's Napa Valley (though very different), there are vineyards here where you can stay for a few days, enjoying the cantinas for rustic Spanish and Italian cuisine. Nearby are trails and sightseeing to work off the extra calories!

Remember that because of the climate, the period from September through March is the best time to go. Rio Grande do Sul has a harsher winter, with icy arctic winds that howl over the highlands. During the summer, the northern coast of the state draws a lot of visitors but the winter is practically deserted due to the cold. Welcome to the land of the *Gaúchos*!

Porto Alegre & the Metropolitan Region

- Enjoy the well organized capital of the *gaúchos*
- The Farroupilha Festival in September has daring equestrian stunts
- The old market district and boat trips offer options for outdoor fun

Porto Alegre *(Ricardo André Frantz)*

The original settlers of Porto Alegre were ranchers and pioneers from Laguna and Santa Catarina who founded the city in 1732. The Jesuits got here in 1750 and set up the first mission in the region following the expedition by explorer Gomes de Andrade. The region was the scene of a notorious dispute between Portugal and Spain, but finally the Spaniards were driven out. As the royal line slowly lost prestige in the New World, revolutions surfaced, such as the Farroupilha Revoultion in 1835, one of the first struggles for power against the imperial regime. Again, in the Federalist Revolution, the region tried to throw off the last Colonial yokes in 1893 with an attempt to install a North American-style presidential system. It was not until 1935 that Brazilian reformer Getulio Vargas was finally able to bring this fiercely independent state into the Union, beginning with the capital city of Porto Alegre**(Unclear. Into what Union?). While best as a jumping-off point to the other adventures listed here, Porto Alegre is worth a day or so to look around.

How to Get Here

The **Salgado Filho International Airport** is on Avenida Severo Dullius, 9010 (☎ 51-3358-2000). By land, it takes about two days to drive from Rio de Janeiro or São Paulo. Airfares were low but tend to change, and long distance executive buses are always a good option from Rio or São Paulo. The **international bus station** is at Largo Vespasiano Júlio Veppo (☎ 51-3288-5410 or 3225-0677 for info from 7 am-10 pm daily). Buses depart from here to local sites, other cities and countries.

Getting Around

There are about 1½ million inhabitants in this pleasant city. The easiest way to look around is a city tour, which takes an hour and a half, stopping in the main neighborhoods and sites of the city. **City Tour Linha Turismo** (☎ 51-3212-3464) at Travessa do Carmo, 84, runs these tours Tuesday through Sunday and holidays for under $10. Wear comfortable shoes because there are a lot of hills once you leave the flat downtown area near the river. Taxis are recommended. If you want, you can get around in a rental car, but watch out for radar speed traps everywhere!

Porto Alegre overview (*Eurivan Barbosa*)

Rental car companies include **Avis** at Avenida Ceará, 344, in the Navegantes neighborhood (☎ 51-3342-0400), open weekdays from 8 am-6 pm, or on Avenida dos Estados at the aiport booth (☎ 51-3371-4344) from 6 am-12 pm daily. **Hertz** is at the airport next door (☎ 51-3337-7755 or 0800-147-300), open 24 hours a day. **Localiza** is at Avenida Carlos Gomes, 230, in the Mont Serrat neighborhood (☎ 51-3328-6000 or 510-3328-5122) open from 8 am-8 pm weekdays and Saturdays, closing at 2 pm on Sundays and holidays. They are also at the airport (☎ 51-3371-4326 or 0800-992-000), open from 6 am-12 pm daily.

For 24-hour taxi service try: **Cidade Tele Táxi** on Rua Caldre Fião, 613, in Santo Antônio (☎ 51-3223-3030 or 3223-1122); **Cooperativa Transtáxi** on Avenida Saturnino de Brito, 345, conjunto 303, at Vila Jardim (☎ 51-3381-2002); **Tele Cooptáxi** on Praça Dr. Baltazar de Bem, 410, at Vila Jardim (☎ 51-3334-7444); or **Tele Táxi on** Rua dos Andradas, 1560, conjunto 2516, in the *Centro* (☎ 51-3228-5777 or 51-3226-1919).

The **24-hour city bus** is run by **Empresa Pública de Transportes e Circulação** but you might have a hard time unless you speak Portuguese or Spanish. There is schedule information at the bus station, the metro station, or ask at your hotel. The **Metrô** subway is a clean and efficient way to get around in the metropolitan region through 17 stations at intervals of approximately 1.2 miles/two km. The **Mercado** is the hub, and from there you can get to the **bus station** (the second stop), **the airport** (fifth stop), to the terminus at **São Leopoldo** for under a dollar a ride. The subway links with the bus system – for hours, lines and connections, check the Internet site (in Portuguese only, unfortunately) at www.trensurb.gov.br or ☎ 51-2129-8477.

Foreign Currency Exchange

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Swap at **Banco do Brasil** (☎ 51-3214-7700) in the *Centro* on Rua Uruguai 185; **Prontur Turismo e Câmbio** on Avenida Independência, 1211, shop 06 (☎ 51-3311-0133); or **Shopping Tour Câmbio e Turismo** on Avenida João Wallig, 1800/1255, in the neighborhood called Chácara das Pedras (aka **Shopping Iguatemi**), ☎ 51-3328-7220.

For More Information

The state **Secretaria de Turismo**, **Esporte e Lazer** (☎ 51-3288-5442) at Avenida Borges de Medeiros, 1501, 10th floor, is open Monday through Friday from 8-12 am and 1:30-6 pm. There is a traveler information booth at the airport open from :30 am-11:30 pm every day (☎ 51-3288-5423 or 51-3371-4871), or at the bus station (☎ 51-3288-5410 or 3225-0677). There is also a well organized urban **Serviço de Atenção ao Turista** traveler's hotline (☎ 51-3212-3464, 51-3333-1873 or toll free in Brazil 0800-517-686). **Porto Alegre Turismo** can help with specific questions, such as how to hire a sailboat charter (toll free in Brazil only ☎ 0800-517-686). More information and photos can be seen at www.portoalegre.rs.gov.br. The **Hospital Municipal de Pronto Socorro** (**HPS**) is at Osvaldo Aranha (☎ 51-3330-9888 or 51-3316-9888).

When to Go

The average temperature averages 68°F/20°C year-round. The temperature can drop a lot, especially in the highlands, in the winter, and it is advised to bring a jacket, jeans, a sweater or other warm clothes any time of year. Remember that the best locations are a little distant from the city, either on the coast or in the hills, which can be visited year-round. In the summer the coast fills up and Porto Alegre turns into a (relative) ghost town.

Festivals & Events

★**Farroupilha** takes place the second 15 days in September, with typical dances, churrasco no rolete (select meats grilled on a stake over open flame), and daring horseback riders. The riders wear typical costumes, including the red bandana that was a symbol of revolutionary spirit since the federalist rebellions in the late 1800s. Every September 20, the city has a holiday parade, and everything shuts down for the *Dia da Revolução Farroupilha.*

Sightseeing

★★Sculpture Gardens of Farroupilha

Right in town, on Avenidas João Pessoa, José Bonifácio, Osvaldo Aranha and Ruas Setembrina and Eng. Luís Englert is **Farroupilha Park** (**Redenção**). There are 45 sculptures in copper and marble, some lit up at night, such as the war monument **O Expedicionário**. There is a small zoo, playground, market, bike and running path, and every Sunday from 9 am to 4 pm there is an antiques and arts fair with side-events and snacks.

Lake in Farroupilha Park

★Old Warehouse District & the Old Public Market

A great way to see the city on foot is to start on Rua da Praia (which does not have a beach, despite the name) starting at the **Casa de Cultura Mario Quintana**, no. 736, named to honor the renowned *gaúcho* poet Mario Quintana. Head to Praça da Alfândega and the state memorial at Rua 7 de Setembro, 1020, with a fairly worthwhile display of local history. The scenic **São Pedro theater** on Praça Marechal Deodoro, in front of the **Government Palace** is open for visits from 12 am-6 pm. On the second floor there is a restaurant if you want to stop for lunch. On the other side of the plaza is the **Palácio Piratini**, headquarters of the state government, alongside the **metropolitan cathedral**, which has architecture inspired by the Italian Renaissance. The nearby **Julio de Castilhos museum** on Rua Duque de Caxias, 1231, has exhibits on history and the formation of the *gaúcho* state.

Palácio Piratini (Ricardo André Frantz)

There is an interesting market called **Mercado Público Central** on the square called **Praça da Alfândega**. Dating from 1869 and in Neo-Classical style, the old market still sells religious and regional artifacts in commercial stalls. Try the ice cream or snacks. Delicious! The adjacent **Feira da Praça da Alfândega** has leather objects, costume jewelry, silver, alpaca sweaters, textiles, wood carvings, and oil paintings for sale. Open Monday through Saturday from 9 am-7 pm at the old warehouse square, Praça da Alfândega. While you are here, you can also check out the local history at **Rio Grande do Sul memorial** (☎ 51-3225-8490).

The Praça da Alfândega has a few other museums and historic houses if you have extra time. The **MARGS** art museum was built by the Germans and has local art expos on the square (☎ 51-3227-2311). The **Santander Cultural Center** also has exhibits (☎ 51-3287-5500). **Palácio Piratini** has panels painted by Aldo Locatelli, with guided visits (Monday through Friday) through the palace grounds. It is on Praça da Matriz, in the Centro. The **Júlio de Castilhos Museum** has archives related to the rich history of Rio Grande do Sul on the same square (☎ 51-221-3959). Nearby is the **Metropolitan Cathedral**.

Old Gas Works

The historic gas works called **Usina do Gasômetro** have been revitalized and today the area houses a cultural center with bookstores, arts centers, a movie theater, cafés, and a place to watch the sunset on the Rio Guaíba. The center is at Av. Presidente João Goulart, 551, Centro. ☎ 51-212-5979.

Adventures in the Air

A 30-minute over-flight of the city costs $40 per person. Departures depend on weather conditions. Contact the **Aeroclube** at ☎ 51-248-3366.

Adventures on the Water

For a simple cruise on the Rio Guaíba to the coastal islands of the estuary, **Cisne Branco** (☎ 51-3224-5222) leaves from the Cais do Porto near the revitalized gas works at Usina do Gasômetro (see above). Buy a ticket here for the boat ride to dozens of islands in the **state park** at the **Jacuí** river delta. Another option is an excursion through the lagoons at **Patos** or **Lago Guaíba**. Boats go to either or both places for about $10 per person on**(leaving from?) Cisne Branco. Ask for what is available. Another good boat is the **Noiva do Caí** (☎ 51-3211-7662 or 51-475-2548) which leaves from the Usina do Gasômetro. The boat lines **Turistinha** (☎ 51-9961-2926) and **Seival** (☎ 51-9818-2274) can be contacted at their offices there to get tickets for the Sunday trips to the **Ilha da Pintada**, for sightseeing and a traditional fish lunch called "*peixe-na-taquara.*" If you opt for the sightseeing through the delta, **Delta do Jacuí Adventure** (☎ 51-3242-5159) has a speedboat charter for up to six. **Raft Poa** (☎ 51-3346-4382) has two-hour sailboat excursions daily.

Adventures on Land

Parque Estadual de Itapuã

A resident of the Parque *(Roger Silva)*

The Itapuã State Park, at the junction of the **Patos** and **Guaíba** rivers in the lagoon region, contains some of the last remaining examples of original flora and fauna of the extreme south. Here you can see hundreds of plant and animal species in their natural habitat, many threatened with extinction. Guides help with the trails (☎ 51-494-8083) or boat excursions (☎ 51-494-1111). You have to pay a small fee at the park offices on Rua Carlos Chagas, 55, 10th floor or on Rua Praia das Pombas, 01 in Itapuã itself, but local guides can handle this for you. Open from Wednesday to Sunday.

What to Buy

Shopping Centers

The best bargain hunting is at the Centro. Try the chic **Moinhos de Vento** strip. You can find good deals on leather coats or jackets here, depending on the season. The best options are the shopping centers in town. Any taxi can take you. **Shopping Iguatemi** on Avenida João Wallig, 1800, is in the Chácara das Pedras neighborhood (☎ 51-3328-7220 or 51-3334-4500). **Shopping Praia de Belas** is at Avenida Praia de Belas, 1181, in the neighborhood called Bairro Praia de Belas (☎ 51-3232-3399 or 51-3231-4499). **Rua da Praia Shopping** is at Rua dos Andradas, 1001 (☎ 51-3211-6600).

KEEPING THE GAÚCHO TRADITIONS ALIVE

The *gaúchos*, as natives of Rio Grande do Sul state are called, are very proud of their folklore. Influenced by the traditional cattle ranching techniques of this region, the *gaúchos* are similar to the cattlemen of Argentina or Paraguay. Folk dancing is one of their prized arts. The *fandango*, which dates back to the 1840s, is a mix of local and European musical styles with Spanish dancing. Later, the fashionable Parisian influences, which allowed dancers to touch, brought the waltz, and it has gotten better ever since. Interlacing of dancing couples is also a theme of contemporary art, such as that of renowned sculptor Vasco Prado. Other modern painters of note are Oscar Boeira, Joaquim da Fonseca, and Glauco Rodrigues. An excellent way to get to know the *gaúcho* arts and way of life is to visit a **Centro de Tradições Gaúchas** ("GTCs"). All around the state these cultural centers welcome locals and tourists to enjoy open-pit barbecues, local music, dancing and, of course, *chimarrão* (the local tea). The most famous centers are the **Galpão Crioulo** in the Parque da Harmonia park on Rua Loureiro da Silva (☎ 3226-8194) or the "**CTG Numero 35**" at Jardim Botânico on Avenida Ipiranga, 5200, open Monday through Friday from 1:30-8 pm.

Arts & Crafts

You can find arts for sale at **Brique da Redenção** on Avenida José Bonifácio, open only on Sundays from 9 am-5 pm, the **Casa do Artesão** (☎ 51-3226-3055) on Rua Dr. Flores, 455, open Monday through Saturday 9 am-6 pm, or the **Mercado Público Central** on Largo Glênio Peres, open Monday through Saturday 9 am-6 pm. Among the items offered are the regional *bomba e cuia*, the apparatus you need to drink *chimarrão* tea. The *bomba* is the silver straw, often worked with traditional designs, that cools the piping hot tea. The *cuia* is a leather cup or gourd often crafted from the scrotum of a bull. Inside, you pack the tea, pour in hot water, and pronto, ready to drink. If you look, you can also find smart leather transport kits that fit a thermos and your custom drinking set, made for taking *chimarrão* on the road (this is one sure sign of a *gaúcho* anywhere in Brazil). Rio Grande do Sul is also one of the world's largest producers of agates and other semi-precious stones and you can get good deals on them here.

Where to Eat

Vegetarians may have a hard time here in this meat-eating city. **Picanha no Disco** ($$$) is an upscale steakhouse at Avenida Bahia, 823, in the São Geraldo neighborhood (☎ 51-3337-4895). For a good regional lunch, Tuesday through Saturday, there is **João de Barro** ($$) on Beco Serrito, 120, in the Vila Nova neighborhood (☎ 51-3263 3273 or 51-3246 7088), but no credit cards accepted. **Moinhos de Vento** is on Rua Dona Laura, 424. Also in the Moinhos de Vento area is **A Taberna** on Barão de Santo Ângelo, 497. This is an English pub and nightclub that serves beer and a steak. Also popular is **Dado Bier and Sushi Bar** ($$$) at Avenida Nilo Peçanha, 3228, where you can drink ice cold *chopp* (☎ 51-3378-3000). Another good option for swilling lager with an assortment of Brazilian or German-style snacks, from Monday through Saturday, is **Bier Garden** ($$) **on** Rua Nova York, 79, in Auxiliadora (☎ 51-3343-1775). If you don't eat red meat, try the *bacalhau* codfish at the **Casa de Portugal** ($$$) on Avenida João Pessoa, 579, in the Cidade Baixa neighborhood (☎ 51-3224-2824), open Thursday through Sunday. For Italian, **Fusilli Ristorante** ($$$) is recommended. It is on Rua Engenheiro Veríssimo de Mattos, 80, in the Bela Vista neighborhood (☎ 51-3335-3784), and is open Monday through Saturday.

Where to Go Out

There are popular bars and restaurants along the **Rio Guaíba** where you can watch the sunset and dine on grilled meat at the *churrascarias*, which claim to be the best steakhouses anywhere in South America (my Argentine friends will disagree). The nightlife of Porto Alegre is comparable to that of São Paulo or Rio in the Southeast Region, but with fewer choices. In the *Moinhos de Vento* neighborhood there is a strip with drinks and dining at **Avenida Goethe** and **Rua Fernando Gomes**, called the "sidewalk of fame." The lower city, or *Cidade Baixa*, is famous for its "bohemian" crowd. The scene migrates around basically four streets: **Ruas Lima**, **Silva**, **João Alfredo**, and **República**. In the **Zona Sul**, the boardwalk offers a nice view of the lake and plenty of bars, restaurants, and cafes to choose from. Several of the better places in town are here.

Where to Stay

Hotel Deville Poa ($$$) is on Avenida dos Estados, 1909, in Anchieta near the airport (☎ 51-3373-5000 or 51-3373-5010, www.deville.com.br).

Hotel Plaza São Rafael ($$), on Avenida Alberto Bins, 514, in the Centro (☎ 51-3220-7000, toll free 0800-512244, www.plazahoteis.com.br), has a pool, sauna, 24-hour service, breakfast and accepts credit cards.

EVEREST
HOTEIS

Everest Porto Alegre

Holiday Inn Porto Alegre ($$) offers quality for a reasonable price at Avenida Carlos Gomes, 565, in Auxiliadora. ☎ 51-3378-2727, toll free 0800-707-6444, www.masterhoteis.com.br.

Everest Porto Alegre Hotel ($$) on Duque de Caxias, 1357, in the Centro, offers good value and beds with goose down bedding, broadband Internet access and 24-hour service.

The Serras Gaúchas Highlands

The Serras Gaúchas southern highlands share a common past with the other countries of the region. It takes about a day to visit the region (stopping for lunch), counting the scenic two-hour drive from Porto Alegre. You are really better off with two or three days. The best options are the **Aparados da Serra** national park or the **Serra Geral** national park at Cambará do Sul. The top destination here is the famous **Canyon of Itaimbezinho**, but you should make a point of visiting towns like **Bento Gonçalves** and **Caxias do Sul** to enjoy the excellent food and drink of Brazil's vineyard country. Another option here is **Gramado**, a scenic town with a cinema festival every August. They have fine dining and *hortênsias* flowers year-round. Nearby **Canela** offers more rugged good times, worth a day or two. It can reach freezing temperature here but some say winter is the best time to visit anyway because it rains less and the views are better outdoors.

During the South American autumn, the temperature is a warm and pleasant 77°F/25°C, perfect for exploring the highland fields. The sunlight is normally very bright here, despite the cool temperatures, and if you have sensitive skin you should use adequate sunscreen because of the high altitude and thin ozone layer. You can swim in some of the waterfalls during the warmer months, which is a great way to refresh yourself after a vigorous hike up to the Rio do Boi stream and the wilderness. Because of the altitude and humidity, temperatures can be low enough year-round so you will want to bring at least a sweater for the evening. If you are lucky, you might notice the eerie *viração*, a local fog famous in these highlands. It happens when warm air mass collides with the cold, dense Arctic jet stream, causing condensation and reducing visibility to near zero.

Enjoying the Serras Gaúchas

Mosquito repellent is your friend here during the summer. Be aware that there are some venomous snakes in the region and, if you are bitten, you are supposed to bring the snake to be identified at a medical outpost. There is a number to call but you may be required to speak Portuguese at the **Centro de Informação Toxicológica** (local toll free hotline ☎ 0800-780-200). My advice is to hire a local guide to help you avoid dangerous wildlife, though incidents are rare. If you have only one day, you can opt for **Itaimbezinho**, **(Explain what it is)which has two trails to choose from. Afterwards, check out the scenic view in the direction of Fortaleza. With two days to travel, you can see the canyon-lands at **Fortaleza**, with their waterfalls and curious rock formations. With three days you have the luxury of tacking on the coast at **Praia Grande** or taking a trail up to the rugged highlands of **Rio do Boi**. It is wise to use only guides who are members of the travel guides association, **Associação dos Condutores Locais de Ecoturismo** (**Acontur**), which maintains and keeps watch over the list of all qualified outfitters in the region and can help plan your trip (☎ 54-251-1230 or 54-9996-8522).

How to Get Here

The Serras Gaúchas region includes several cities, from Porto Alegre to Cambará do Sul, on State Highway RS 020. The roads are in good condition for driving but be especially careful for radar speed traps nine-12 miles/15-20 km out of town where the marked limit varies fiendishly from 60 km/hr to 80 km/hr without much warning. After checking out the National Parks, you could opt for a half-day or an overnight to see the towns of Taquara, São Francisco de Paula and Tainhas. The roads are well paved. The easiest way in by car is on Federal Highway BR 116 north to the old German colony of Novo Hamburgo, then State Highway RS 239 to Taquara. There are some tolls so make sure you have small change or notes. Suggested rental companies in Caxias do Sul are **Avis** (☎ 54-213-2522) and **Localiza** (☎ 54-223-8777 or 54-223-8729). In Gramado there is **Eurocar**, on Rua João Petry, 397 (☎ 54-286-3986), **Central Locadora**, on Rua Madre Verônica, 250 (☎ 54-286-2275), or **Autolocadora Gramadense**, on Avenida das Hortênsias, 1408, sala 3 (☎ 54-286-7232). Or refer to the rental agencies listed in Porto Alegre.

Adventures in Aparados & Serra Geral National Parks

The unified state parks of Aparados da Serra and Serra Geral maintain a wildlife preserve in a spectacular section of the highlands. When weather permits (or depending on your tolerance for icy winds and humidity), you can hike the forest trails. These bring you to strange basalt rock formations amid the pine and deciduous forest. Local lore is that the canyons were cut by ancient rivers 200 million years ago. **Aparados** is most famous for its **Itaimbezinho** canyon, the largest in South America. These cliffs reach an altitude of 19,024 feet/5,800 m and the canyons extend 4,560 feet/2,000 m across. The longest vertical drop has been measured at 2,376 feet/720 m. Local wildlife includes reptiles, birds, field deer and the rare *jaguatirica* ocelot. In the outlands you might see *guara-wolves*, the prowling wild dogs also prevalent in

Itaimbezinho *(Claus Bunks)*

the Central West Region, here adapted to the chillier clime. The flora of the region is also remarkable. The park open to the public Wednesday to Sunday 9 am-5 pm (☎ 54-251-1277 or 54-251-1262). For tours, get in touch with **Rio das Antas Turismo** on Rua Erny Hugo Dreher (☎ 54-451-2844, www.riodasantas.com).

Where to Stay & Eat

São Francisco de Paula is the closest city for lodging in the region. Try the bucolic farmhouse **Fazenda Hotel Invernadinha** on Highway RS 235 at the Km 58 mark (☎ 54-244-1514). Two others in town are **Hotel Cavalinho Branco** on Praça Tiradentes, 50, in Lago São Bernardo (☎ 54-244-1263) or **Fazenda Hotel das Araucárias** on Rua Ipiranga, 20 (☎ 54-244-1395). There is one regional churrascaria called **Campo do Meio** on Avenida Getúlio Vargas, 656 (☎ 54-244-1341). In **Cambará do Sul**, for lodging try the rustic **Chalés Quero-Quero** (☎ 54-251-1223) or **Hotel Sabrina** (☎ 54-251-1147). There are simple accommodations at **Pousada Fazenda Pindorama** (☎ 54-251-1225 or 54-9977-6284) or **Pousada Alvorada** (☎ 54-251-1284). For lunch or dinner there is a steakhouse **Fogão Campeiro** (☎ 54-251-1849), or try the local cantina, **Casa Nostra** (☎ 54-251-1321).

Wine Country: The Vale dos Vinhedos

- Explore the savory cantinas and vineyards of five cities
- Ride the romantic Maria Fumaça narrow-gauge steam train
- Fish, canoe or hike in the rustic Vale do Rio das Antas

Brazil's wine region, Vale dos Vinhedos, embraces the cities of **Garibaldi**, **Bento Gonçalves**, **Farroupilha**, **Flores da Cunha** and **Caxias do Sul**. This interesting part of Brazil is the offspring of the Mediterranean in the New World. Its Tuscan homesteaders have kept their traditions alive to the present day, in the styles of the houses, the methods of farming, and the appreciation for wine. Local wines are good but not exactly world class. No one would question the appeal of the native landscape, however, and the hospitality of the

Vineyard, Caxias do Sul (Ricardo André Frantz) inhabitants, who are proud of their status as guardians of something unique. When you hear the curious dialect called *vêneto*, brought from Venetian immigrants, you might mistake it for Spanish. **Caxias do Sul** is the biggest town and the center of the traditional wine-pressing Bacchanal here in February and March every other year (only even years). The vineyards of **Bento Gonçalves** are responsible for most of the local economy (the landholders here are few in number and are very wealthy). **Garibaldi**, some eight miles/13 km from Bento Gonçalves, produces Brazilian sparkling white wine served all over the country as champagne. Take advantage of the local vineyards to sample Brazilian wines or the excellent local cheeses. Depending on when you go, there are always outdoor activities as well, such as a scenic train ride or a canoeing excursion.

How to Get Here

To get to the wine region, take Highway BR 116 from Porto Alegre to Caxias do Sul. The small airport, **Aeroporto Regional Hugo Cantergiani**, on Avenida Salgado Filho, 3451 (☎ 54-213-2566), functions Monday through Saturday 6 am-11 pm, Sundays 7 am-11 pm. The **bus station** is on Rua Ernesto Alves, 1341 (☎ 54-228-3000). Radio **taxis** are at ☎ 54-211-4141 or contact the Associação de Guias de Turismo da Serra Gaúcha travel guides association at ☎ 54-221-8811. It is not hard to drive from Porto Alegre on BR 116.

For More Information

Get additional tourist information at Rua Ludovico Cavinatto, 1431, in the Nossa Sra. da Saúde neighborhood. ☎ 0300-147-1111.

Local Outfitters

In Bento Gonçalves the best outfitter is **Rio das Antas Turismo** on Rua Erny Hugo Dreher, 197. ☎ 54-451-2844.

Adventures in Wine Country

★Vineyard Taverns

There are many such taverns in the Valley of the Wines but the following are the most popular to visit: **Adega Casa de Madeira**, **Adega Cavalleri**, **Allied Domecq do Brasil**, **Casa Valduga**, **Vinícola Cave de Pedra**, **Miolo**, **Chandon do Brasil**. The valley is on the Travessa Guaíba, 75. Access is through RST 470 and RS 444. **(Confusing. The valley is at a particular address? The valley is only open from 8 to 6? And the heading for this section, Vineyard Taverns, doesn't make sense. Are the names you give of taverns, or of vineyards? Needs explanation)Open daily from 8 am-6 pm. Information is available by phone (☎ 54-454-3222 or 54-451-9601). There is an Internet site with useful info at www.valedosvinhedos.com.br.

★The Trentino Valley

Between **Caxias do Sul** and **Farroupilha**, nestled among the vineyards, is the Vale Trentino. Here you can stop at the local cantinas and check out what is happening at the vineyard or sample the wines or delicious grape juice from the region. The wine cooperativa, or co-operative, is in the town of Forqueta. Check out the **Museum of the Grape and the Wine** at **Adega Silvestri** or at **Vinhos Dei Rizzi** from Monday through Friday 9 am-1 pm and 2-5 pm. (☎ 54-206-1051or 54-207-1090).

Adventures on Land

Hikes & Trails

The Vale do Rio das Antas is a recommended place for four wheeling, hiking, mountain biking, rappelling, climbing, fishing, canoeing, rafting, or paragliding. Contact **Rio das Antas Turismo** on Rua Erny Hugo Dreher, 197 (☎ 54-451-2844).

They can show you options such as the **Caminhos da Colônia** trail between **Caxias do Sul** and **Flores da Cunha**. This is an out-of-the-way, picturesque place to hike. Colonial-style artifacts are for sale here**(where?) and you can see the churches, vineyards, or local cantinas along the trails after a good hike. For more information see www.caminhosdacolonia.com.br.

Near the villa of São Pedro there is a 4.8-mile/eight-km stretch of trail where you can see the influence of the Italian immigrants. There is wealth of native craftwork in the stone houses. From Tuesday through Sunday it**(what? the villa of Sao Pedro? By villa do you mean a stately home? or a town?) is open from 8 am to 11:30 pm and 1:30 pm-6 pm. Information at ☎ 54-453-2582.

★★Adventures on the Smoking Mary

A fun thing to do is ride the “Smoking Mary” passenger train, **Maria Fumaça**, that links Bento Gonçalves, Garibaldi and Carlos Barbosa. The ride takes 1½ hours over a scenic route of 14 miles/ 23 km. At the hospitable villa of **Bento Gonçalves**, you will be received with sparkling wine and cheeses, mixed with local Italian and *gaúcho* folklore. The trip costs around $10 per person. The train operates one slot on Wednesday and one on Saturday, leaving from Bento Gonçalves at 2 pm and returning from Carlos Barbosa at 4 pm. There is more info at www.mfumaca.com.br or call ☎ 54-455-2788.

Where to Eat

If eating out in **Bento Gonçalves**, don't miss the **Restaurante de La Coline**, on RST 470, Km 220 (☎ 54-453-1127), or the steakhouse **Churrascaria Ipiranga**, on Rua Olavo Bilac, 200 (☎ 54-452-7152). In **Caxias do Sul** eat well at **Cantina Pão e Vinho**, on Rua Ludovico Cavinatto, 1757 (☎ 54-211-2500) or **Ristorante Giuseppe**, on RS 122 at the 12½ Km mark, shop 213 (☎ 54-214-9005).

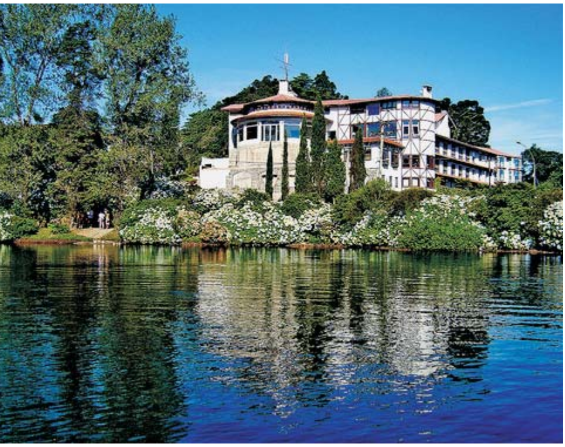
If you want to check out daily life on a vineyard, you should consider a visit to Casa Valduga, which also operates a charming inn in the Valley of the Wines. Good food and Italian music is always available. Reservation are suggested ahead of time (☎ 54-453-1154). Get more information at www.casavalduga.com.br

Where to Stay

In **Bento Gonçalves** the **Hotel Dall'Onder**, on Rua Erny Hugo Dreher, 197 (☎ 54-451-3555 or toll free in Brazil 0800-704-3000), is recommended. There are two tourism agencies on site, including Rio das Antas and Giodani Turismo. Another suggestion is the bed and breakfast **Pousada Casa Mia**, on Travessa Niterói, 71 (☎ 54-451-1215, www.pousadacasamia.com.br). In Caxias do Sul there is **Reynolds International Hotel** on Rua Dr. Montaury, 1441 (☎ 54-223-5844, www.reynolds.com.br).

The Hortênsias Region

- Film Fest in August draws cinema crowd to Gramado
- Forests of ginkgo and pine can be explored on trails
- Enjoy the rustic Bavarian- and Italian-style towns



Gramado (Jrbresolin)

Gramado calls itself the "capital of Brazilian cinema." This scenic Baviarian-style town 39 miles/65 km from Porto Alegre receives the *glitterati* from all over Brazil and the Latin American cinema world to celebrate the cinematographic arts each August. Making reservations in advance is wise as it gets busy at festival time and from December through March. **Canela**, the sister city in the woodlands just four miles/seven km away, has trails, hikes and other adventures – check with the suggested outfitters for local weather conditions and options available. While smaller, woody Canela is a reasonable alternative for lodging if you can't get a place in Gramado. There is a waterfall called Cascata do Caracol on the Estrada do Caracol. For indoor pleasures, the German and Italian settlers have provided these charming cities with excellent local cuisine. The brisk temperatures common to the region of pines and lakes is uncommon for Brazil, and the locals are a bit proud of that too. The name "*hortênsias*" refers to the flowery streets.

> Hortensias, also known as "mopheads," are flowers named in honor of Hortense, the daughter of 18th-century botanist Prince de Nassau. Mopheads feature large round flowerheads resembling pom-poms.

Getting around in Gramado or Canela is not difficult and on foot you can wander the town. There is easy parking anywhere. Note: during the festival months there is a "blue area" where you are obliged to pay an hourly parking fee. Nearby, there are some sporting side-trips, especially closer to Canela, where you can rappel, go rafting or see the region's famous falls.

How to Get Here

Rent a car in **Porto Alegre**. You can take BR 101 from Porto Alegre to **Novo Hamburgo**, then State Highway RS 239 to Taquara for another 30 miles/50 km and switch onto RS 020 to reach the rustic towns of **Gramado** and **Canela**, by simply catching RS115 just before you enter **Taquara**.**(Too confusing. Can't follow it) Gramado is 25 miles/43 km e Canela is five miles/eight km farther on**(Can't follow). If you want to continue on to **São Francisco de Paula**, it's 18 miles/30 km farther. There are tolls either way and speed traps until Canela. The **bus station** (☎ 54-286-1302) in Gramado is at Av. Borges de Medeiros, 2100

Festivals & Events

Besides the ★**Gramado Latin American Film Festival** in August, there is the **Festa da Colônia** in April, with music and dance presentations highlighting the robust rural German and Italian influences. If you are lucky enough to be here at the right time, the **Natal-Luz** celebration lights up the city with choral singing and parades in November and December. In Canela every March there is a chocolate festival with lots of sweets. The city likes scenic lighting projects, ostensibly to please the film crowd, but they are creative.

Sightseeing

In Gramado see the **Centro Municipal de Cultura** on Rua São Pedro, 269, with its museum. Open daily 8 am-6 pm. There is a sea of flags in a symbolic display of all the Brazilian states at the square called **Praça**

Leopoldo Rosenfeldt – you might zip by in a taxi. **Igreja Matriz São Pedro** is the basalt cathedral with stained glass depictions of the life of Christ on Avenida Borges de Medeiro at the municipal government square. The **Lago Joaquina Rita Bier** is surrounded by summer homes built 70 years ago and is an interesting area to poke around. The **Lago Negro** was an experimental project of the 1950s. The idea was to reproduce a European lake surrounded by pines from the Black Forest of Germany. It is in the Planalto neighborhood. (☎ 54-286-2966). The **Cascata Waslawick** has a waterfall and natural pool, on the highway to Nova Petropolis, accessed by State Highway RS 235. It's worth a side-trip. Don't miss the terrifying **pendulum bridge**, 40 feet/12 m over the gorge between Canela and São Francisco de Paula.

Culinary Adventures

Gramado is known for its cuisine, typically a groaning board of Colonial breads, cakes, tarts, fruits and pies for breakfast, with grilled spring chickens for lunch, and for dinner the traditional Swiss fondue of steak, fruit or bread. The city is also famous for its sweets. The Prawer chocolate factory has been around for 30 years and produces nine tons of chocolate per month. You can actually visit the factory to witness the process. Visits are Monday through Friday 9-11:30 am and 1:30-4:30 pm for groups of up to 40 visitors. **Chocolates Prawer** is at Avenida das Hortênsias, 4100 (☎ 54-286-1580).

Adventures on the Water

In Canela if you want to brave the white water, try rafting at the **Parque das Corredeiras**. On the border with Canela and Três Coroas there is the Quilombo valley and the **Rio Paranhana** with level three (beginner) rafting. The 2.4-mile/four-km descent starts in Barragem das Laranjeiras and pauses for rock sliding, swimming and "motor boat surfing." Longer or night time rafting is possible as well under the moonlight. For information contact **Atitude** travel guides in Canela at Avenida Osvaldo Aranha, 391 sala 16, ☎ 54-501-2732, www.atitude.tur.br/rapel.htm. You can get there from either Canela or Gramado.

Adventures on Land

Pine & Ginko Arboretum

There is a 24-acre/10 ha sequoia and *ginkgo biloba* arboretum and park called **Parque das Sequóias**, where there are routes for trekking, mountain biking or horseback riding. Open daily 9 am-6 pm (☎ 54-282-1373, sequoias@por.via-rs.com.br). The **Parque do Pinheiro Grosso** is thick with pines along the Canela-Gramada road on Highway RS 466. The native wood is 700 years old with an *araucária* (a Paraná pine or "candelabra tree") 137 feet/42 m high and nine feet/2¾ m in diameter. Access is via a wood foot bridge. Visits daily 8:30 am-5:30 pm.

Parque do Caracol

Cascata do caracol *(Leandro Anhelli)*

Cascata do Caracol is a 430-foot/131-m waterfall in a basalt cliff with a restaurant and fair for arts and crafts. The trails are kept up by **Projeto Lobo-Guará**. There is a 927-step trail at the Caracol waterfall but it's a tough little hike. There is a panoramic elevator as well if you're not up to the climb. It's at Canela-Gramado, RS 466, Km 1, 4.2 miles/seven km from Canela. Open daily 8:30 am-5:30 pm (☎ 54-278-3035). You should also check out the **Floresta Encantada**, or enchanted forest, with a view of the Lageana valley. There are great sporting opportunities in the region. The nearby **Vale da Lageana** (the valley below the Caracol falls) has a few old timber trails, including one that leads to the 224-foot/70-m falls called **Cascata da Lageana**. You can also rappel at the **Vale da Lageana**. Information, ☎ 54-504-1405.

What to Buy

The Hortencias Region is famous for chocolate. If you want to see a working chocolate factory, go to the Prawler (see above). There are also good deals on leather and wool such as alpaca sweaters. Gramado is more commercial than Canela.

Where to Stay

In Gramado

Boutique Hotel Varanda das Bromélias

The **Boutique Hotel Varanda das Bromélias** ($$$$) has fine international lodging on Rua Alarich Schultz, 158, in Planalto (☎ 54-286-6653, reservas@varandadasbromelias.com.br). **Hotel Serrano** ($$$) on Avenida das Hortências, 1480, downtown (☎ 54-286-1332, www.hotel-serrano.com.br) is a little cheaper and almost as nice. Check out the local inns ($-$$) such as **Pousada Chalé da Montanha**, on Rua Nápoli, 30, Mato Queimado (%%54-286-6082), **Pousada Águia Branca** (☎ 54-286-6628), at Rua Horácio Cardoso, 140, in Planalto, or the **Pousada Bella Terra**, on Avenida Borges de Medeiros, 2870, downtown (☎ 54-286-3333).

In Canela

Hotel Laje de Pedra ($$$,) on Rua das Flores, 222, has a fine breakfast and a spa (☎ 54-278-9000, www.lajedepedra.com.br). **Continental Serra Hotel** ($$$) on Rua José Pedro Piva, 220, downtown (☎ 54-3031-1111, www.hoteiscontinental.com.br) is a bit grander. **Grande Hotel Canela** ($$), on Rua Getúlio Vargas, 300 (☎ 54-282-1285, www.grandehotel.com.br) offers good value. Or try the **Hotel Vila Verde** ($$), on Rua Boaventura Garcia, 292 (☎ 54-282-4133, www.hotelvilaverde.com.br). There are some pleasant bed and breakfast inns such as **Pousada Alto da Serra** ($$), on Avenida Borges de Medeiros, 999 (☎ 54-282-2133) or the earthy **Pousada Encantos da Terra** ($), on Rua Tenente Manoel Correa, 282 (☎ 54-282-2080, www.pousadasencantosdaterra.com.br).

Camping

Pitching a tent is the cheapest way to stay in the **Hortênsias Region**. Try **Camping Gramado** ($) on Rua Venerável, 877, Avenida Central (☎ 54-286-2615).

Where to Eat

In Gramado you can have a cold beer (*chopp*) and a grilled spring chicken (*galeto*) on any street corner. The local *galeterias* serve them up to order. **Galeteria Mamma Mia** ($-$$), on Avenida das Hortênsias, 3400 (☎ 54-286-1991), and **Galeteria Giuseppe** ($-$$), on Rua Garibaldi, 23 (☎ 54-3036-0007), are suggested. **Le Petit Clos** ($$$) is at Rua Demétrio Pereira dos Santos, 599, on the road up to Lago Negro (☎ 54-286-1936). Or for regional Italian cuisine, try **Pastaciutta** ($$$), on Avenida Borges de Medeiros, 2083 (☎ 54-286-2131). **Edelweis** (☎ 54-286-1861) serves Colonial German cuisine on Rua da Carrieri ,1115. The **Café Colonial Bela Vista** has a good Colonial breakfast (☎ 54-286-1608). **La Caceria** (☎ 54-286-2544), on Avenida Borges de Medeiros, 3166, is also recommended.

The Jesuit Missions

- See the mystical region of the Jesuit missionaries in Brazil
- The Historical Heritage Institute orients visitors to archeological sites
- Visit the hermitage and rustic villa of São Miguel das Missões

This mountainous region 276 miles/460 km from **Porto Alegre** was one of Europe's main footholds in South America 500 years ago. Today it is scattered with Jesuit ruins, built here under the royal authority of Spain and the Treaty of Tordesilhas of 1494. For many years, the Jesuit missions proliferated as an academic and spiritual enterprise – one of the few colonization efforts that was beneficial to indigenous populations here. Then bands of Brazilian slavers and adventurers called *Bandeirantes* began incursions into the generally unexplored region of the wilderness where the Jesuits had established contact with the locals. The Spaniards were forced out by the Portuguese, and it was not until 1750 that the Treaty of Madrid declared the entire southern region of South America under Spain's royal authority, bringing peace to the zones of conflict.

In the years that followed, the Jesuits returned to the missions throughout the area including parts of what are Argentina and Paraguay today. Then they were again forced out by the expansion of Brazilian territory in the war with Paraguay. For more on this three-way territorial war that defined South American political geography, see the *Center West Region*. Today the Brazilian contributions to this international religious and cultural heritage called the "International Circuit of Missions" include seven different villages that were founded by the Jesuits. The Historical Heritage Institute at the Zone of the Missions protects four of these archeological sites. The main one, also recognized by UNESCO as a World Historical and Cultural Heritage site, is in the rustic villa of São Miguel das Missões. There are four in all, and you can visit them in two or three days as a side-trip from Porto Alegre.

São Miguel das Missões

Ruins at São Miguel das Missões (Goldemberg Fonseca de Almeida)

São Miguel das Missões has the best conserved Jesuit hermitage at the site known as **São Miguel de Arcanjo**. This redoubt of monastic colonizers played a vital role in the pacification of the local indigenous population, but has always been a remote destination. Even today, its population barely passes 8,000. Lodging is best in Santo Angelo, a city 30 miles/50 km away. The São Miguel Arcanjo Archeological Site is on Rua Antunes Ribas, open for visits from 9 am-7:30 pm daily. There is a modest entry fee. For information, ☎ 55-3381-1291 or 55-3381-1221. About 1.2 miles/two km away is the **Missionary Fountain**, on Rua João Bittencourt, no number. You should also see the **Museu das Missões**, with religious objects, indigenous artifacts and fragments of building decorations recovered from these ruined outposts in the highlands of South America (open daily). For information, ☎ 55-3381-1291.

How to Get Here

From **Porto Alegre**, São Miguel das Missões is a six-hour drive on Federal Highway BR 386 to **Carazinho** (180 miles/300 km away), then onto Federal BR 285 toward São Miguel das Missões and Santo Ângelo. If you are more comfortable on a bus, there are two or three options that leave at 5 am, arriving by noon in a microbus or van. The **bus station** in Santo Ângelo is at Rua 7 Povos das Missões, 419 (☎ 55-3313-2618). Check out the Internet site www.rotasgauchas.com.br which lists them**(lists what?). There are also regional flights to the **Aeroporto Regional Santo Ângelo** on Rodovia RS 218, at the Km 13 marker (☎ 55-3313-6617).

When to Go

The subtropical climate is mild because of its higher inland location, with average temperatures around 66°F/19°C. Note the weather has an ugly reputation in this desolate region and rain can reduce road conditions or wash out your parade unless you are in a 4WD vehicle. Always check local conditions as close as possible to when booking your trip.

For More Information

There are some worthwhile sites to check out on the Internet with information and photos of the region: www.rotamissoes.com.br, www.goldentravel.com.br, www.missoesturismo.com.br, or www.caminhodasmissoes.com.br.

What to Buy

The indigenous village at **Aldeia Alvorecer**, called *Tekoa Koeju*, is part of the São Miguel site. There you can enjoy a folkloric presentation by the chief of the village though you will be expected to shell out for something locally made after the song and dance. At least you won't have to worry about getting permission from wildlife protection officials for purchases at Ibama as is required in Amazonia or parts of the Northeast Region. One of the legacies of the Jesuit period is painstaking dedication to craftwork and artisanry in the production of leather items, wood carvings, stone objects and local textiles with natural fibers in striking colors. Get in touch with the **Associação Tupambaé** for more information (☎ 55-3381-1000).

Where to Stay

There are two recommended hotels in the region, either **Wilson Park Hotel Missões** ($$-$$$) on Rua São Miguel, 664 (☎ 55 3381-2000, www.wilsonparkhotel.com.br), or **Hotel Barichello** ($$-$$$), on Avenida Borges do Canto, 1567, downtown (%%55 3381-1275). You should check out the rooms in advance at the simple bed and breakfast inn, **Pousada das Missões** ($), ☎ 55-3381-1030. You might like it.

Where to Eat

Regional cuisine ($$-$$$) is prepared at **O Guarani** (☎ 55 3363-1101), **Restaurante Casarão**, on Avenida Borges do Canto, 1244 (☎ 55 3381-1202), or **Restaurante São Miguel**, on Rua São Luis, no number (%%55 3381-1178).

Santo Ângelo

The last of the seven outposts was founded here at Santo Ângelo in 1706 by Diogo de Haze, the Belgian monk who became a prosperous producer of erva-mate**(what is that?), known in the region as *chimarrão*. This old rail town was the scene of a battle in 1918, an attempt to galvanize the revolutionary overthrow of the government. The indigenous peoples are honored in a monument to **Sepé Tiaraju**, by the *santo-angolense**?* artist **Olindo Donadel**, on Avenida Brasil. You might notice the Town Hall building and **Acervo Tupambaé **means what?**)are a local landmark and restored in original Colonial style. Located at Rua Antônio Manoel, open for visits 8:30 am to 11:30 pm and 2 to 5 pm on weekdays. For info, ☎ 55-3312-0100. **The Rua da Redução**, currently called Rua Tres de Maio, once the main entrance to the Jesuit Reduction**(what do you mean Reduction?) is an example of the period. The revolutionaries, who were government rail engineers, heisted a steam engine and sallied out of town. The concrete monument on Avenida Brasil**(monument to what?) is 49 feet/15 m high and is open Monday through Saturday 8:30-11:30 am and 2-5 pm. The **Centro Municipal de Cultura Santo Ângelo Custódio** also includes the **Teatro Municipal Padre Antônio Sepp**, on Rua Tres de Outubro, open 8:30-11:30 am and 2-5 pm Monday through Saturday. In the same site as the 1707 mission is the **Catedral Angelopolitana**, similar to the Redução de São Miguel Arcanjo in São Miguel, with Renaissance flourishes combined with Brazilian Baroque. It is at the square called Praça Pinheiro Machado, open 8:30-11:30 am and 1:30-5:30 pm. The

Santuário de Schoenstatt has expositions and an archeological nucleus**(Means what?) at the entrance to Buriti, open 8:30-11:30 am and 1:30-10:30 pm (☎ 55 3312-3071). The frescos at the chapel called **Capela do Colégio Verzeri** on Avenida Getúlio Vargas, 1694, were influenced by Aldo Locatelli, but actually painted by Emilio Sessa. Visits to this treasure trove of Iberian Colonial artistry can be scheduled (☎ 55-312-2327).

Where to Stay

There are reasonable hotels in this region that caters to the Latin American artistic community once a year for the **Gramado Festival**. But the holiday season (around December) can be fairly busy too. Keep in mind that prices soar during the festival. It is best to make reservations well in advance. Local establishments tend to accept credit cards. **Santo Ângelo Turis Hotel** ($$), on Rua Antônio Manoel, 726, downtown has service in German (☎ 55-3313-5245, or 3313-5255, www.turishotel.com.br). **Hotel Avenida** ($$), on Avenida Venâncio Aires, 1671, downtown (☎ 55-3313-3011) is comfortable, with a pool and other amenities. **Hotel Maerkli** ($$), on Avenida Brasil, 1000 (☎ 55-3313-2127) offers good service.

Where to Eat

As elsewhere in Rio Grande do Sul, there are lively steakhouses called *churrascarias*, with fire-pits. Here there is a German motif to the setting. In the evening, try the **Casa Real Restaurante** ($$), on Avenida Getúlio Vargas, 1655 (☎ 55-3312-2587). Two busy steakhouses ($$) are **Churrascaria Tchê Minuano**, on Rua Marechal Floriano, 1764, open for lunch, and **Churrascaria do Faldino**, on Rua Santo Ângelo, 84.

What to Buy

Good deals are available on leather, wood, textiles, clay or indigenous-style products (some may in fact be authentic) in the artists' co-operative at **Santo Ângelo** (☎ 55-3312-4811). You might try getting in touch with the **Associação Brique da Praça** (☎ 55-3312-0100) which works with local artisans, or check out the shops in town, **Flecha Mágica Arte & Artesanato** (☎ 55-3312-5428) or **Tenda da Terra** (☎ 55-3312-9966).

Language

Knowing some basic Portuguese can go a long way toward improving the quality of your trip.

Pronunciation Guide

Vowels

There are some special considerations for vowels because, unlike Spanish, they have different sounds at different times.

E – You have to pay attention at the end of the word, because it sounds like "y" in "happy," e.g., *alegre* (alegry) and *se* (if), which actually sounds like the Spanish "si."

O – at the end of the word "o" sounds like the "oo" in "boot," so *obrigado* (thank you) is pronounced "Obri-ga-dOO." And the definite article "*o*" (the), as in *o Brasil*, is pronounced "oo."

The diphthongs (two vowels in the same syllable) are also different than Spanish.

AI – pronounced as in "ride" / *pai* (father)
AU - pronounced as in "shout" / *mau* (bad)
EI – pronounced as in "they " / *cantei* (I sang)
OI – pronounced as in "boy" / *herói* (hero)

Consonants

C – generally pronounced hard, as in "car" (*capa* / cover). However, when followed by "i" or "e" it's pronounced softly, as in "city" (*cidade* / city). It's also pronounced softly whenever it's written with the accent ç (aço / steel).

CH – pronounced like English "sh," so *chave* (key) is said "SHA-vee."

D – In most parts of Brazil this sounds like a J whenever it comes before an "i" or "e." So *dia* (day) is pronounced "JEE-a" and *onde* (where) is "ON-jee"

T – such as the "d" it changes before "i" and "e." So *noite* (night) is pronounced "NOY-chee."

S – In Rio and some places in the North it sounds like "sh" when it comes before a consonant or at the end of a word, e.g. *este* (this) is "ESH-chee."

H –is always silent.

L – at the end of a word, it sounds like "w." So *Brasil* is pronounced "BRAZ-eew." When followed by "h" it sounds almost like the y sound, as in "million," so *filha* (daughter) is pronounced "FEE-lya."

N – When it's followed by "h" it becomes "ny." So "*vinho*" sounds like "VEEN-yoo."

R – The R is the biggest giveaway for non-native speakers. At the beginning of a word it's pronounced like an English "H." So "*Rio*" is pronounced "HEE-oo." The RR in the middle of words has the same sound, so "*carro*" is " KAH-hoo."

X – is pronounced like "sh," so *Xingu* is SHEEN-goo.

Stress & Accent Marks

Any word which has an accent of any kind, including a tilde (~), is stressed on that syllable. So *café* (coffee) is pronounced "ka-FE."

Words that end with the vowels A , E , O are stressed on the penultimate syllable. So *vende* ("he sells") sounds like "VEN–djee." This always applies when these vowels are followed by M, S or NS, e.g. *falam* (they speak) is stressed "FA–lam."

Words that end with the vowels I and U are stressed on the final syllable: *aqui* (here) is pronounced "a-KEE." This also applies when I and U are followed by M, S or NS. So Atum (tuna) is pronounced "a – TUM."

Words ending in consonant are usually stressed on the final syllable, e.g. *arroz* (rice) is "a-HOSH."

The tilde is used to nasalize vowels. For example, ão is pronounced "aowng" (*não* / no).

A circumflex over an E gives it stress and changes it to "ay," as in say. So, *você* (you) is "vo-SAY."

Useful Phrases

Greetings & Salutations

Hi / *Ói* or *olá*
Good morning! / *Bom dia!*
Good afternoon! / *Boa tarde!*
Good evening or good night / *Boa Noite!*
Thank you / *Obrigado / a*
You are welcome / *De nada*
Yes / *Sim*
No / *Não*
Excuse me / *Com licença*
Sorry / *Desculpe!*
Please / *Por favor*
Can I help you ? / *Posso Ajudar?* or *Pois não!*
Of course! / *Claro!*
How are you / Tudo bem?
I'm okay, and you? / *Tudo bom, e você*?
Good, thanks / *Bem, obrigado / a*
See you! / *Até logo!*
See you tomorrow / *Até amanhã!*
Have a nice weekend / *Bom fim de semana!*
Bye / *Tchau!*
Have a nice trip / *Boa Viagem!*
Have fun / *Divirta-se!*

Forming Questions

Who is he? / *Quem é ele?*
What is your name? / *Qual é seu nome?*
Where is the restroom? / *Onde fica o banheiro?*
Why do you study Portuguese? / *Por que você estuda Português?*
When is the Carnival? / *Quando é o Carnaval?*
What time does he arrive? / *A que horas chega?*
How much is it? / *Quanto custa?*
Do you speak English? / *Você fala Inglês?*
I don't speak Portuguese / *Eu não falo Português*
Speak slowly, please / *Fale devagar, por favor*
Be careful! / *Cuidado!*

At the Restaurant

waiter or waitress / *garçon* or *garçonete*
menu / *cardápio*
table / *mesa*
appetizer / *entrada*
bread / *pão*
plate / *prato*
glass / *copo*
cup / *xícara*
knife / faca
fork / garfo
spoon / *colher*
napkin / *guardanapo*
red or white wine / *vinho tinto* or *branco*
ice / *gelo*
beer / *cerveja*
draft beer / *chopp*
juice / *suco*
coffee / *café*
tea / *chá*
salt / *sal*
sugar / *açúcar*
sweetener / *adoçante*
bill / *conta*
tip / *gorjeta*
change / *troco*
Please, a table for two / *Por favor, uma mesa para duas pessoas.*
Smoking or no smoking? / *Fumante ou não fumante?*
No smoking / *Não fumante*
The menu, please / *O Cardápo, por favor.*
To drink, a beer / *Para beber, uma cerveja*
The bill, please / *A conta, por favor*

Basic Foods

rice / *arroz*
beans / *feijão*
egg / *ovo*
pasta / *massa*
potato / *batata*

tomato / *tomate*
onion / *cebola*
lettuce / *alface*
soup / *sopa*
chicken / *frango*
meat / *carne*
fish / *peixe*
shrimp / *camarão*
sauce / *molho*
baked / *assado*
boiled or stewed / *cozido*
fried / *frito*
grilled / *grelhado*
very rare / *mal passado*
rare / *ao ponto*
medium / *ao ponto para bem*
well done / *bem passado*
raw / *cru*
salty / *salgado*
sweet / *doce*
spicy (hot) / *apimentado*

Getting Around

Turn right / *Dobre à direita*
Turn left / *Dobre à esquerda*
Go straight / *Siga em frente*
street / *rua*
block / *quadra*
city / *cidade*
square / *praça*
bus stop / *ponto de ônibus*
sidewalk / *calçada*
address / *endereço*
district / *bairro*
traffic light / *sinal or semáforo*
to cross / *atravessar*
to park / *estacionar*
to walk / *andar*
train / *trem*
bus / *ônibus*
bicycle / *bicicleta*
car / *carro*
plane / *avião*
boat / *barco*
bus station / *rodoviária*
airport / *aeroporto*
timetable / *horário*
guide / *guia*
here / *aqui*
there / *lá*
dangerous / *perigoso*
Where is the hotel? / *Onde fica o hotel ?*
I want a round-trip ticket / *Quero uma passagem de ida e volta*

At the Hotel

hotel / *Hotel*
room / *Quarto*
single or double room / *apartamento de solteiro* or *de casal*
bathroom / *Banheiro*
shower / *ducha*
phone / *telefone*
hot water / *água quente*
towels / *toalhas*
sheet / *lençol*
pillow / *travesseiro*
mattress / *colchão*
toilet paper / *papel higiênico*
air-conditioner / *ar condicionado*
fan / *ventilador*
I want a double room. / *Quero um apartamento de casal.*
How much does it cost per night? / *Quanto custa a diária?*
Is the breakfast included? /*O café da manhã está incluído?*
At what time is the check-out? /*A que horas é o check-out?*
Do you acept credit cards? / *Aceita cartão de crédito?*
I want to go to ... / *Eu quero ir para ....*
Where is the exit? / *Onde é a saída*
Where is the entrance? / *Onde é a entrada*
Entrance prohibited / *Entrada proibida*
Free admission / *Entrada gratis*
It's forbidden to smoke / *É proibido fumar*

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